

Council

A meeting of Council was held on Wednesday, 5th March, 2014.

Present: The Worshipful the Mayor (Cllr Mrs Kathryn Nelson); Cllr Mrs Lynne Apedaile, Cllr Paul Baker, Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Derrick Brown, Cllr Mark Chatburn, Cllr Julia Cherrett, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Michael Clark, Cllr Robert Cook, Cllr Nigel Cooke, Cllr Gillian Corr, Cllr Evaline Cunningham, Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Phillip Dennis, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr Kevin Faulks, Cllr John Gardner, Cllr Robert Gibson, Cllr David Harrington, Cllr Ben Houchen, Cllr Eileen Johnson, Cllr Elliot Kennedy, Cllr Paul Kirton, Cllr Terry Laing, Cllr Miss Tina Large, Cllr Colin Leckonby, Cllr Alan Lewis, Cllr Ken Lupton, Cllr Ray McCall, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr Mick Moore, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Ross Patterson, Cllr Maurice Perry, Cllr Mrs Maureen Rigg, Cllr David Rose, Cllr Andrew Sherris, Cllr Michael Smith, Cllr Norma Stephenson O.B.E, Cllr Mick Stoker, Cllr Tracey Stott, Cllr Steve Walmsley, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr David Wilburn, Cllr Norma Wilburn, Cllr Mrs Mary Womphrey, Cllr Mick Womphrey, Cllr Bill Woodhead and Cllr Barry Woodhouse.

Officers: N Schneider (CE); J Danks (R), J Humphreys (CESC); P Dobson, C Straughan (DNS); P Kelly (DPH); D E Bond, P K Bell, K Wannop, M Henderson, J McDonald (LD).

Also in attendance: Shane Sellers (Chair of Save Stockton South), David Butler (Public Questioner), John Latimer (Public Questioner), Sandra McLeavy (Public Questioner), Members of the public.

Apologies: Cllr David Coleman, Cllr Barbara Inman, Cllr Mohammed Javed, Cllr Jean Kirby and Cllr Andrew Stephenson.

C Councillor Nigel Cooke - LGIU Awards

105/13

The Worshipful the Mayor congratulated Councillor Nigel Cooke who won Scrutineer of the Year at the LGIU Awards.

Councillor Cooke had played a vital role in developing the Affordable Warmth Strategy at Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.

He had also set up and chaired the Fuel Poverty Partnership, which aimed to reduce the effects of fuel poverty on the health and well-being of local people, as well as working to ensure more homes meet the Decent Homes Standard.

Councillor Cooke was commended by judges for his collaborative approach in working to end fuel poverty.

C Declarations of Interest

106/13

All Members present declared a personal interest in respect of agenda item 7 – Commemoration of Individuals and Councillors in relation to the Council's functions regarding honours given to Members.

Councillor Mrs Wilburn declared a personal interest in respect of agenda item 9 – Motion to Council on Sixth Form Provision as she was a Governor at Stockton Riverside College.

Councillor Evaline Cunningham declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 9 – Motion to Council on Sixth Form Provision as her husband was a named MP.

C Minutes

107/13

The minutes of the meeting held on 29th January 2014 were signed by the Worshipful the Mayor as a correct record.

C
108/13 **Residential Development Applications within the South Stockton Area**

Members were informed that a petition containing 2408 valid signatures had been received from Save Stockton South. As the petition exceeded the threshold of 2,000 signatures and in accordance with Part 8a of the Council's Constitution the petition must be debated at a meeting of Council.

Members received a report that updated them with regard to the residential development applications within the South Stockton Area.

The report outlined that the local authority proactively fulfilled its planning role, and actively promoted sustainable development. It approached development management decisions positively – looking for solutions rather than problems so that applications could be approved wherever it was practical to do so. It also attached significant weight to the benefits of economic and housing growth.

However, the National Planning Policy Framework guidance minimised a Local Planning Authority's ability to influence development proposals to achieve quality outcomes; enable the delivery of sustainable development proposals on the basis that economic necessity would normally outweigh any other consideration. The Government's insistence on Local Planning Authorities having to demonstrate that they had a 5 year supply of deliverable and available Housing Land together with a buffer between 5 and 20% at a time of such significant economic difficulty and uncertainty resulted in previously considered robust and sound housing policies being treated as out of date and the vision and objectives of the Local Plan being overridden. Consequently the Planning Committee was severely constrained when it considered residential planning applications which accorded with the National Planning Policy Framework but were at odds with its adopted policies in the Core Strategy and Saved Local Plan Policies.

The concern raised by residents about residential development on greenfield sites within the Borough had centred on the decisions to approve applications because they accorded with the National Policy Framework which had drawn criticism that the Council had ulterior motives in granting planning permission. What appeared to have been missed in the analysis and criticism was that National Government had produced the sea change in planning policy with the National Planning Policy Framework and this outweighed Core Strategy and Local Plan policy in certain circumstances, including where the local planning authority lacked a five year housing supply. This was underlined in a High Court ruling R (Save our Parkland Appeal Ltd) v. East Devon District Council [2013] EWHC 22 (Admin). HHJ Sycamore QC found that given the government guidance in relation to refusal on prematurity grounds that a refusal on the basis of prematurity would not have been consistent with national planning policy and would have been in breach of central government guidance.

A petition collected by the Save Stockton South Action Group had been received by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.

The petition stated that "as a result of the recent planning decisions we believe

that the heritage, future and safety of Stockton South is under serious threat. Urban Sprawl is destroying our green spaces and many residents are concerned that our already creaking infrastructure will struggle to cope with this level of development.

In the light of this, we have lost confidence in Stockton Borough Council and its Planning Committee and request a full investigation into its practices and development decisions since 1 January 2011”.

With regard to Planning Committee procedures the Planning Committee comprised a Chairman and Vice-Chairman and 12 Members of the Council.

The training requirements for Members were assessed annually in relation to changes to primary planning legislation and material planning considerations. The annual training was delivered by a nationally recognised Planning training specialist company and had included:-

The essential elements of determining planning applications
The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): A Briefing for Councillors

A Planning Update for Councillors including:-

the Government’s reforms for the planning system
changes introduced by the Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013
the Judicial Review process
the NPPF and planning guidance
Environmental Impact Assessment

Sound bite training sessions related to issues such as the Draft affordable housing Supplementary Planning Document at which it could be explained and clarification of the issues could be discussed which added to Members understanding.

The range reflected the issues facing the Borough and covered any issue for which Members had either requested a session or an issue such as changes to secondary legislation or the planning appeal system.

All officers presenting had a Royal Town Planning Institute recognised planning degree and were Chartered Town Planners.

The Planning Committee was statutorily required to consider and determine planning applications in accordance with the development plan unless material planning considerations indicated otherwise. By granting planning permissions for housing and industrial / commercial developments the needs of the community were addressed with the provision of new and affordable homes and employment opportunities protecting the environment and the promotion of sustainable forms of development across the Borough.

The role of the Planning Committee was to determine applications under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and related legislation in relation to cases which:-

Warranted consideration by Planning Committee as defined in the Constitution;

Large scale development proposed by the Council

Those cases where there were more than 5 letters / emails (with name and address) by way of response which were contrary to the recommendation of the case officer, with the exception of mobile phone mast applications where they remained delegated regardless of the number of objections received.

The role of the Individual Members remained key in not only representing their constituents and the residents of the Borough as a whole but in questioning and testing the information and representations before them when considering planning applications. By debating the wide range of material considerations to balance and decide the appropriate weight between them Members were able to make properly informed determinations of planning applications before them.

With regard to The Planning Committee Protocol, in 2008 the Council had become concerned by the number of occasions when elected members of the planning committee had refused planning permission contrary to officers' advice. Members of the planning committee could do this, but applicants had a right of appeal to the planning inspectorate, which then made a final decision. Losing such appeals was expensive for councils.

The 2008 protocol provided that, where the Planning Committee was proposing to act contrary to officer advice, such a decision would be provisional. Senior Officers of the Council would then investigate the issues raised. The Officers' view might be the Planning Committee's decision could not be supported on planning grounds and the Council would risk losing an appeal to the Planning Inspectorate. In such a case the Planning Committee would be invited to consider the matter again. The Planning Committee was then free to reach its decision at its next meeting. The Council reviewed its use of the protocol at regular intervals.

The protocol was democratic because it had been by Council the elected members of the Planning Committee still had the final say and the Council reviewed the use of the protocol from time to time.

With regard to the background to decisions the National Planning Policy Framework was introduced March 2012.

The new Government advice made it clear that the lack of a 5 year supply of deliverable housing meant that the Local Planning Authority's relevant housing policies couldn't be considered as up to date.

Applications must be considered strictly in relation to the guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework.

The Government position was very clear in decisions by the Secretary of State. While he acknowledged that it was important for Councils to be able to identify the needs and requirements in their area, this was not the same as allowing them to postpone their obligation to identify and maintain a five year supply of developable sites.

The Secretary of State decisions demonstrated this presumption by granting

planning permission where there was a lack of a 5 year supply of deliverable housing.

In determining a planning application a Local Planning Authority had to pay due regard where an adopted or approved development plan contained relevant policies. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 required that an application for planning permissions should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan(s) for the area, unless material considerations indicated otherwise.

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL and 1) SECRETARY OF STATE FOR COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT (2) COMPARO LIMITED (3) WELBECK STRATEGIC LAND LLP [2013] EWHC 286 (Admin) was particularly relevant providing a decision of the High Court as future case law. The essential question raised by the case was, whose view was to prevail as to whether these developments would go ahead, the local council's or the Secretary of State's?

The Council's case was that there was a "fundamental requirement for the Council, post the Localism Act 2011, to be in the driving seat of spatial planning for its area, including housing land provision" which the Secretary of State had ignored. It was the Council's case that the 2011 Act and the policy which it embodied had brought about a sea change in the proper approach to planning decisions which required much greater priority than hitherto to be given to the views of local planning authorities. This view was not upheld however.

This decision actually supported the Secretary of State's approach that the delivery of housing supply land overrode the need to plan and a decision by a Local Planning Authority and that this was lawful.

There had been 6 large scale residential development planning applications determined in the South Stockton Area since the introduction of the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF). The Borough was not able to demonstrate a 5 year supply of deliverable housing land. The Regeneration and Environment LDD would incorporate the results of the Core Strategy Review of housing options. The LDD would allocate sufficient deliverable and developable housing sites to ensure that the housing requirement to 2030 was met and that a rolling 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites was achieved.

The reported detailed the following 6 large scale residential planning applications determined in the South Stockton:-

11/2842/EIS - Allens West, Durham Lane, Eaglescliffe - Outline application for the erection of a residential development comprising 845 no dwellings (Class C3) and a 60 no. Bed Care Home (Class C2) with associated retail, creche and community facilities, landscaping, roads, parking and infrastructure. (9 May 2012)

Outline planning permission had previously been granted in 2009 for mixed use development on the site comprising warehousing, industrial, residential (500 dwellings), care home, retail and community uses plus associated parking, roads, landscaping and infrastructure.

The proposed development was considered in the context of the Environmental

Statement and its associated impacts, in particular in respect to traffic and transport, noise, landscape and visual, wildlife, ground conditions, cultural heritage, safety, surrounding settlements and residential amenity and aviation. The impacts of the proposal were considered against national, regional and local planning guidance and the development as proposed was considered to be in line with general planning policies set out in the Development Plan, was acceptable in terms of highway safety, does not adversely impact on the neighbouring properties and character of the area, ecological habitat, flooding and land remediation.

The planning application was approved subject to a Section 106 Agreement and appropriate planning conditions.

12/0980/OUT - Morley Carr, Allerton Balk, Yarm - Application for outline planning consent, with all matters reserved save for means of access, for residential development, community hall, public open space, outdoor recreational facilities and associated access arrangements and landscaping (22 August 2012)

In terms of planning policy the NPPF stated 'Local Plans are the key to delivering sustainable development that reflects the vision and aspirations of local communities. Planning decisions must be taken in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise'. It was clearly highly relevant to the application that the Local Planning Authority was unable to demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing land. The Government advice in the NPPF made it clear that the lack of a 5 year supply of deliverable housing meant that the Local Planning Authority's relevant housing policies could not be considered as up to date and the application must be considered strictly in relation to the guidance in the NPPF. The Government position was very clear in that in recent decisions by the Secretary of State while he acknowledged that it was important for Councils to be able to identify the needs and requirements in their area, this was not the same as allowing them to postpone their obligation to identify and maintain a five year supply of developable sites. The decisions showed that the balance between the plan and delivery had been recalibrated to ensure delivery by granting planning permission where there was a lack of a 5 year supply of deliverable housing.

In terms of the core planning principles in the NPPF that underpinned both local plan making and decision making, the Government had emphasised that every effort should be made objectively to identify and then meet the housing needs of an area and respond positively to the wider opportunities for growth. Consequently the Government only provided a 12 month window for the full weight for policies in post 2004 DPDs to be applied even if there was only a limited degree of conflict with the Framework. In Stockton's case the estimated adoption of the Core Strategy review at the time of this application was indicated as being likely to be the beginning of 2014 which was clearly outside the Government's timescale. As much as the Local Planning Authority would have wished to progress the consideration of the acceptability of the application site through the plan making process, the application had to be considered in accordance with the NPPF guidance in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Other material considerations were considered in detail and the development as proposed was considered to be acceptable in terms of highway safety, it did not adversely impact on neighbouring properties or the ecological habitat and flooding and complied with Health and Safety Executive requirements.

It was considered the proposal would not give rise to any adverse impacts which would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the NPPF. It was considered that approval of the application was not so significant to the outcome of the Core Strategy Review of housing options that planning permission should or could be reasonably withheld.

12/1990/EIS - Land South of Green Lane, Yarm - Outline application for residential development for up to 370 dwellings, additional railway station car parking, access, infrastructure, open space and landscaping (all matters reserved except for access (4 June 2013)

Members were aware that there was clearly a tension between the site being released for housing development and the core principle in the NPPF that stated that planning should be genuinely plan-led. However, decisions by the Secretary of State strongly suggested that this principle was being accorded less weight than the need to demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites. This was notwithstanding the fact that the Core Strategy Review was housing - delivery led and the Council was seeking to put in place a five year supply of deliverable housing sites as quickly as possible through a plan-led approach.

As previously referenced the Council was not able to demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites and the Tees Valley Strategic Housing Market Assessment (TVSHMA) identified an annual deficit in the provision of affordable housing. It was a benefit of the application that it would contribute to the provision of market and affordable housing. This was not withstanding the Council's preference for addressing these issues through a plan-led approach.

It was considered the proposal would not give rise to any adverse impacts which would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the NPPF. It was considered that approval of the application was not so significant to the outcome of the Core Strategy Review of housing options that planning permission should or could be reasonably withheld.

13/0776/EIS - Mount Leven Farm, Leven Bank Road, Yarm - Revised outline planning consent with all matters reserved except for means of access, for development of a retirement village including related leisure and social facilities and infrastructure. (10 July 2013)

An outline planning application for a similar form of development, for a retirement village and associated facilities (ref; 12/1546/OUT) had previously been refused by the Planning Committee on 12th December 2012 due to the impact of the development on the green wedge and its impact on highway safety.

The Officer report made clear that significant weight should still be attached to planning policy regarding development in the green wedge and the harm that would arise out of the urbanisation of the land, the coalescence of the settlements of Ingleby Barwick and Yarm and the open character of the site and green wedge. In weighing up these policy constraints against the economic benefits of the scheme, it was considered that despite the benefits and merits that the proposed development would offer, these would not be sufficient enough to outweigh the conflicts with the adopted development plan policies.

However, notwithstanding the previous refusal and the officer recommendation for refusal, Members considered that the proposal was acceptable and the economic benefits of the scheme outweighed other policy considerations and granted planning permission subject to a Section 106 Agreement and appropriate planning conditions.

12/2517/OUT - Land at Low Lane, High Leven, Ingleby Barwick - Outline application for the erection of Ingleby Manor Free School and Sixth Form and residential development (350 dwellings) including means of access. (5 February 2013)

It was considered that a benefit of the proposal was that it would boost significantly the supply of housing and along with the provision of a Free School would have significant social and economic benefits. However no evidence had been provided as to why the benefits associated with a Free School could not be achieved without coupling this proposal to a residential development on the scale of 350 houses. This was considered to be particularly substantial in respect of the impact on the Green Wedge, which would be less significant if the proposal were restricted to the provision of a Free School.

Whilst acknowledging the weight and importance which was required under the NPPF to be attached to the provision of housing to meet the 5 year supply and in bringing about education provision in the form of the Free School, it was considered that the provision of the housing development would have such a significant impact on the Green Wedge that the associated community benefits of the Free School would not be sufficient enough to outweigh these conflicts with the adopted development plan policies and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Furthermore insufficient information had been provided to satisfactorily demonstrate that there would be no significant harm to protected species or to justify a reduction in the provision of affordable housing from the required 20% level in the adopted Core Strategy Policy CS8 (5). The planning application was refused on two grounds.

The applicant appealed against the decision and the appeal was recovered by the Secretary of State for his determination. A Public Inquiry was held and the Planning Inspector reporting to the Secretary of State recommended that the appeal be allowed and planning permission be granted.

The Secretary of State acknowledged that the proposals failed to accord with the development plan in terms of its impact on the green wedge, the character and appearance of the area, and recreational opportunities. He agreed with the Inspector that, given the provisions of paragraph 215 of the Framework, and the

findings in the Inspectors Report, the Framework was a material consideration that carried weight such as to justify a decision other than in accordance with Stockton's development plan.

13/2184/OUT - Field at Grid Reference 440817 514442, Urlay Nook Road, Eaglescliffe - Revised Outline application for residential development (C3) . (13 November 2013)

The application had been submitted following the refusal of planning permission for a similar scheme in June 2013. The original application was the subject of an appeal to the Planning Inspectorate which the Council were seeking to defend and Counsel had been appointed to lead the Council's case. Members were provided with Counsel's opinion on the planning merits of the appeal and planning application and the likelihood of the planning appeal being allowed with an award of costs against the Council.

As the site was within the limits of development a residential development was in accordance with the principles of saved Local Plan Policy HO3. The proposal was considered contrary to Core Strategy Development Plan Policy CS7 which indicated that no additional housing sites would be allocated before 2016 and land for only 50 – 100 dwellings (approximate) being allocated between 2016 and 2021 in this area, however, guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) advised that adopted housing policies should be considered out of date where the authority could not demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing land, thereby rendering the housing policy out of date and unable to be given weight in respect to allocating housing numbers. The Council demonstrated a 4.23 year supply of housing land at the time the application was considered. In view of the NPPF, the site being an unallocated greenfield site within the Limits of Development and within the Yarm, Eaglescliffe and Preston Housing Sub Division area, the principle of residential development was considered to be acceptable.

Being outline with all matters reserved, the main considerations of the application beyond the principle of development related to sustainability, traffic, indicative layout, contributions / provisions, ecology, archaeology, contamination. These were all considered in detail and the impacts of additional traffic could be adequately mitigated as could impacts on archaeology and ecology. The site was considered to be within reasonable distance of a range of services including education, retail, employment, leisure and a bus service existed near to the local centre, which this scheme proposed to extend the route of for a 5 year period, thereby bringing it closer to the development. The site was considered to represent a sustainable location for residential development.

It was considered that although contrary to the housing supply policies within the Core Strategy, these could not be given any material weight since the Local Planning Authority did not have a 5 year supply of housing, and therefore the scheme would be in accordance with relevant saved policies of the local plan, the NPPF and other remaining core strategy policies.

The application was approved subject a Section 106 Agreement and appropriate planning conditions.

The concern of Council Members to the impossible position they had been placed in by National Government's National Planning Policy Framework in determining planning applications culminated in the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport, Councillor Smith, at the Full Council Meeting on 6th November 2013 submitting a motion in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12.1 which provided that:-

"This Council calls on the Conservative-led Government to urgently review its National Planning Policy Framework which effectively removes planning control from local authorities and communities and places it in the hands of private developers, and to reverse its huge reduction in public funding to support the development of brownfield sites for housing by investing to create jobs and new housing in the Borough and the rest of the North East.

Housing developers have made it clear they are no longer interested in developing brownfield sites because the costs of remediating these sites before they can start construction are too great. This has meant that the brownfield sites which previously contributed to the required five year supply of housing are no longer deliverable within a reasonable timescale. This is leading to Councils being directed by national Government policy, planning appeal and case law precedents, to approve developments on greenfield sites to meet their obligation to deliver a five year supply of housing land. This is causing increasing anxiety in the local communities affected, and as a result totally undermining the Government's stated intention of empowering local people to influence plans for their areas.

We have great sympathy for the many local residents who have invested considerable time and effort in contributing to local consultations on local planning frameworks and we can understand their extreme concern at the current top down interference with the democratic process that the new planning system was intended to prevent.

We resolve to write our MP's urging them to raise this issue with Ministers and to request Parliament urgently to review the National Planning Policy Framework and to look again at the levels of investment available to support development of brownfield sites."

The motion had been carried.

As a result of this resolution Alex Cunningham MP for Stockton North wrote to Eric Pickles Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government drawing the Minister's attention to the issues. A reply was received from Nick Boles Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Planning) which acknowledged the important role Brownfield land could make in contributing to housing needs and cited examples of incentives offered by the Government to facilitate the reuse of existing unused or redundant land or buildings. However the letter did not indicate any new initiatives that would address Stockton's issues and acknowledged the reality of there being brownfield sites that were not economically viable to develop. Mr Boles letter concluded by advising that an up to date plan would stand the Council in good stead and that the NPPF policies would be kept under review but that there were no plans to revise them at the moment. This piece of advice from Mr Boles clearly was not a practical one as

the Council was seeking to have an up to date plan in place but had to go through the lengthy statutory process which would still take well over another year at least to achieve and would be dependent on being able to demonstrate evidence of a five year supply of deliverable housing land with a 20% buffer.

Stockton South MP James Wharton had responded to the Council's motion. He referenced the reply received by Alex Cunningham MP from Nick Boles Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Planning) as the formal reply on the subject. He had also discussed the matter with Ministers and considered there were a number of local problems and pointed to the failure to ensure the Local Plan had been kept up to date. The letter also referred to the status of the 5 year calculation by the Council and the likely impact on population drift from other parts of Teesside.

Whilst it was understood the Government were committed to ensuring the planning system did everything it could to support sustainable economic growth, the previous planning system was the most proactive it had ever been and engaged the Community fully in its plan making process. The fundamental difference had been over the allocation of land for residential purposes and responding to market signals which had changed the balance from the importance of the Local Plan and its policies to the expedient of allowing housing development at all costs.

The local authority already identified and planned for new or emerging sectors likely to locate in their area. Policies were flexible enough to accommodate requirements not anticipated in the plan and allowed a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances

The local authority proactively fulfilled its planning role, and actively promoted sustainable development, it approached development management decisions positively – looking for solutions rather than problems so that applications could be approved wherever it was practical to do so. It also attached significant weight to the benefits of economic and housing growth

However, the NPPF guidance minimised a Local Planning Authority's ability to influence development proposals to achieve quality outcomes and enabled the delivery of sustainable development proposals on the basis that economic necessity would normally outweigh any other consideration.

Mr Sellers (Chair of Save Stockton South) was in attendance at the meeting and was given the opportunity to present the reasons for and the background to the petition. Mr Sellers presentation could be summarised as follows:-

- * Residents considered the motion agreed by Council on 6th November 2013 to be disingenuous
- * The infrastructure could not cope with the amount of developments that had been approved
- * Residents were worried about the loss of open spaces
- * There had been inconsistencies in application decisions
- * Save Stockton South invited the Leader of the Council to a public meeting to speak to local residents
- * The Council had approved a disproportionate number of developments in the South of the Borough

- * Mount Leven Farm and Morley Carr Farm should have been removed from the SHLAA because of Health and Safety grounds
- * The legal advice that had been distributed to the Planning Committee Members had put them under pressure to approve the application
- * The Council had hidden behind the NPPF
- * 6 developments had been approved ahead of any infrastructure improvements
- * How would the Council stop any further applications in the future getting approved
- * There is unprecedented development in the South of the Borough

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport was then given the opportunity to respond to the presentation and the response could be summarised as follows:-

- * The NPPF was at the centre of the argument
- * Developers were no longer interested in developing brownfield sites as subsidies had stopped for brownfield sites
- * Members understood and had every sympathy with residents' concerns
- * The Council did not have much influence on the NPPF
- * If the Council refused and continued to refuse planning applications without sound planning reasons the planning function would be taken off the Council
- * Members shared residents' concerns about central government policy
- * In a recent planning appeal £340k costs had been awarded against the Council concerned
- * Michael Gove had called for more development on greenfield sites

Members then debated the issues of the Save Stockton South Petition. Members comments could be summarised as follows:-

- * The Council had not consulted appropriately
- * The Planning Committee and the Licensing Committee should not be politically representative
- * It was pointed out however that that it was the law for the Planning Committee and the Licensing Committee to be politically proportionate
- * The dominant party would push through applications
- * The Borough had a poor record for departing from the Local Plan
- * Members should stand up to their convictions
- * The decisions that Members made affected the quality of life for people
- * The petition leaders and in particular Shane Sellers should be congratulated for putting the petition together and presenting it to Council
- * There was an understanding that Planning Officers often had no choice but to recommend approval to applications because of the NPPF
- * The Council should make more representation to Government
- * The Council needed to carry out more meaningful consultation
- * The Council should put on hold any further large scale applications until the Local Plan was up to date
- * In the last 3 years the Planning Committee had approved more than 2500 houses
- * Traffic problems in the south of the Borough were getting worse
- * Eaglescliffe had a problem with rat runs
- * Yarm High Street used to be a lovely place but it wasn't anymore
- * 100 new parking spaces in Yarm would not help the situation
- * The whole key to this debate was the NPPF farce

- * There was a lot of anger amongst from residents in the south of the Borough
- * It was an insult to Members intelligence to say that the new houses would not impact on the traffic situation
- * There were a lot of political games going on in the background
- * The Housing Needs Assessment was done before the recession
- * Hardly any of the houses that had been approved had been built
- * Not sure where the Housing Need came from as housing was not selling
- * The Council Local Plan was mostly up to date except for the most important part, the 5 Year Housing Supply
- * The Housing Survey needed to be done quickly
- * Housing banks were being built up by developers
- * The Housing Need only applied in the South East of England
- * The Conservative led government had created this planning system
- * Under the previous planning system developers had to look at brownfield sites first
- * The Council had great sympathy for local residents as they had been let down by central government

The Worshipful the Mayor offered to meet with petitioners along with the Cabinet Member, Chief Executive and appropriate officers, to allow for a more informed discussion on some of the issues raised in the debate.

Councillor Cook then moved the following motion, seconded by Councillor Smith:-

- We support the offer of the Mayor to meet with petitioners along with the Cabinet member, Chief Executive and appropriate officers, to allow for a more informed discussion on some of the issues raised in tonight's debate.
- The Council again records its great sympathy for the many local residents who have invested considerable time and effort in contributing to local consultations on the local planning framework. We understand their extreme concern at the current top down interference with the democratic process that the new planning system was intended to prevent.
- We resolve to write directly to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Planning) to again request Parliament to urgently review the National Planning Policy Framework and to look again at the levels of investment available to support development of brownfield sites.

Councillor Lupton moved the following amendment to the motion, seconded by Councillor Laing:-

"That this Council Request the Government to confirm that the Council's Local Development Framework and Core Strategy, in relation to its Housing Strategy, is up to date, meets objectively assessed needs and has sufficient flexibility to adapt to changing needs: and if they are not prepared to do this:-

That they confirm that they will accept that planning decisions will be made on the basis of the current LDF and Core Strategy until such time as the Regeneration and Environment Local Development Document Preferred Options Draft is completed. Thereby ensuring that there is a plan led approach

in identifying a supply of specific, developable and sustainable sites to satisfy the Borough's housing needs and the requirements of the NPPF; and

That we also resolve to write to our MP's urging them to support our submission and to ask that they also support a request for government to consider releasing additional funds to support the development of brown field sites."

A vote then took place on the amendment. The amendment was not carried.

Councillor Mrs Rigg then moved the following amendment to the motion, seconded by Councillor Lewis:-

"In addition to the approach to government advocated by Cllr Lupton that Stockton Borough Council set up a Task and Finish group of Councillors and Officers to look into ways in which Councillors and residents (subject to commercial confidentiality) can be involved in pre-application discussions in order to try to alleviate the problems, especially around sustainability of developments, which have arisen over the last year.

Further, to accelerate the production of an up to date housing needs assessment for the borough as openly and transparently as possible so that everyone can understand how the figures are produced."

A vote then took place on the amendment. The amendment was not carried.

A vote then took place on the substantive motion. The substantive motion was agreed.

The Worshipful the Mayor thanked Members for their contribution to the debate and thanked Mr Sellers and members of the public for their attendance at the meeting indicating that written confirmation of the decision that had been made would be provided in due course.

C 109/13

Public Question Time

The following question was submitted by Mr David Butler for response by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport:-

"Does Stockton BC agree that Yarm Town Centre is to be provided with additional car parking as part of its Borough Wide Car Parking Strategy, which identified a need for approximately 100 spaces and if there has not been any announcement about these, prior to 5th March 2014, then can Stockton report on progress being made?"

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport responded with:-

"Stockton Borough Council announced plans on February 4, 2014 to create up to 80 new long-stay car parking spaces near Yarm High Street."

Mr Butler asked the following supplementary question:-

"Can the Councillor explain how the Council proposes to obtain the land for the

proposed car park, if the Council has submitted a planning application for the car park and will the Council use a compulsory purchase order if the land owners will not sell the land?"

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport responded with:-

"We are in negotiations with landowners, the Council has submitted planning applications for two new long-stay car parks, each with around 40 spaces. The proposed car parks are off Silver Street, behind Barclays Bank's Yarm High Street branch and behind the Blue Bell pub on the Eggescliffe side of Yarm Bridge."

The following question was submitted by Mr David Butler for response by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport:-

"Does Stockton BC agree that Yarm Town Centre will require further additional car parking of approximately 125 spaces, in the event that numerous approved development applications are proceeded with. If planning conditions 106 are attached to the proposed and planned developments, what is the aggregate mitigation contributions of these planning conditions and how many potential additional car parking spaces does this aggregate amount predict?"

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport responded with:-

"Evaluation and mitigation of proposed developments does in some circumstances require additional car parking. This does not necessarily relate to long stay, but may mean the provision of additional short and medium stay for access to the Town Centre facilities, in line with the Borough wide Parking Strategy."

David Butler asked the following supplementary question:-

"If the aggregate amount is less than 125 how can any further development be allowed when there will be increased traffic and where will the additional car parking spaces be found?"

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport responded with:-

"We are looking at the situation in line with the Borough wide Parking Strategy."

The following question was submitted by Mr John Latimer for response by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport:-

"Does Stockton BC have a plan for the provision of additional car parking spaces, identified by its Technical Services Department, in mitigation of the numerous approved development effects on car parking in Yarm Town Centre?"

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport responded with:-

"I refer you to the previous answer but Stockton Borough Council announced plans on February 4, 2014 to create up to 80 new long-stay car parking spaces

near Yarm High Street."

The following question was submitted by Mr John Latimer for response by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport:-

"Does Stockton BC agree that Section 106 Planning Conditions, commuted sum contributions, are potentially refundable, in normal circumstances, and that the commuted sum is deemed to be a reasonable estimate of the mitigation identified and can it, therefore, explain, reference planning application 12/0980/OUT, Morley Carr Farm, how the commuted sum contribution of £265000, reference car parking mitigation, identified by its Technical Services Department, is shown to be a reasonable estimate and why it is specifically NON REFUNDABLE?"

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport responded with:-

"Section 106 agreements are used to obtain financial contributions for schemes which mitigate the impact of a development. For example highway works which the Highway Authority may need to carry out, an education contribution or monies towards public open space and play areas. Normally in the event of a development not proceeding and the planning permission expiring the agreement ceases to have effect. Equally where a financial contribution has been made and the money has not been spent on the mitigation scheme the Section 106 agreement would normally contain the provision that at the expiry of a period of five years from the date the Local Planning Authority received the financial contribution it would be required to be returned to the Developer.

The planning obligation to mitigate against the impact of the Morley Carr Farm development on Yarm High Street was detailed within the committee report on which the planning decision was made. A development of 350 houses was calculated by the Council to require the provision of an additional 6 car parking spaces on Yarm High Street. In the case of this application, as it was an outline application only, the housing mix was unknown but was to include a proportion of executive housing. Executive homes create a higher trip generation than other housing types so the contribution was increased to take into account an unknown increased impact on the High Street. The contribution is for the improvement of car parking facilities in Yarm and no other purpose.

In certain circumstances (particularly where more than one development is contributing to the same mitigation works or the timescales for the mitigation are long term) we do provide that a s106 contribution is non-refundable - and it is a matter for the council and the owner to agree."

Mr Latimer asked the following supplementary question:-

"It had been indicated that £265,000 was suggested by Taylor Wimpy and one of the possibilities was that they had also suggested it be non-refundable, what are the other possibilities?"

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport responded with:-

"I believe I have already answered the question and I cannot add anything more."

The following question was asked by Mr Shane Sellers on behalf of Ms Sandra McLeavy for response by the Leader of the Council:-

"The five year supply is demonstrated in the quarterly review to be dwindling. This being the result of a combination of the slowing of Housing Trajectory and an outdated housing requirement calculation. I would like to ask the following:-

According to NPPF – deliverability is key. To be considered deliverable, sites should be available, be a suitable location for development, be achievable (i.e. with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered within five years). It is noticeable in the quarterly reports that timescales well in excess of five years are being accepted from developers. Can you explain why?

The housing need was set several years ago and there have been major changes in the economy during that time. Since the abolition of housing targets the planning authority has been in a position to recalculate the need. When is this expected to be done? If it is not planned why not?

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

"The question and explanatory comment underlined the misunderstanding that the general public and James Wharton MP for Stockton South have in relation to interpreting the policies within National Planning Policy Framework and the most up to date Government guidance.

One of the main purposes of introducing the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, or the Framework) was to significantly increase the supply of housing land and reduce the weight that could be accorded to a Council's approved development plan. It did not provide for expediting measures by local authorities to identify and allocate additional sites for residential development.

The extent of the real meaning and impact of the NPPF has been established in the High Court and Court of Appeal which have set out in landmark decisions how the requirements of the policies should be interpreted in relation to housing supply.

Decision makers, including Planning Inspectors, must address the Framework. If a five year supply of deliverable housing sites cannot be demonstrated then relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date and there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development unless any adverse impacts would outweigh the benefits. Whilst it is appreciated that local residents often feel that adverse impacts do outweigh the benefits, experience nationally with the Planning Inspectorate suggest that the bar for adverse impacts is being set very high.

Regarding the housing requirement, this is set out to 2024 in the adopted Core Strategy having been established through the Regional Strategy. For the Core Strategy Review the Council decided to roll forward the average yearly requirement to 2030. The Core Strategy Review is focused on how to achieve this requirement. Whilst it is appreciated that there are a range of views about the housing requirement, it should be pointed out that these include views from

the planning consultants representing landowners and developers that it should be revised upwards. Both the High Court and Court of Appeal have made clear that planning Inspectors cannot rely on the constrained housing requirement set out in a Regional Spatial Strategy. The Council however feels that the current approach reflects its aspirations and does not currently have scheduled a fresh review of the housing requirement.

With regards to the five year supply, the quarterly reports do not in fact show that the five year supply is dwindling. The last full annual update showed a supply of less than 4 years. The latest quarterly update showed a supply of more than 4 years (4.37). Ms McLeavy then asks why timescales well in excess of five years are being accepted from developers. Unfortunately the Council does not have any control over the rate at which developers build out sites. This tends to be governed by factors completely outside of the Council's control such as the developer's predicted 'rate of sales'. Basically developers will, using their obviously extensive experience of the housing market, try and predict how many homes they can sell on a particular site on a yearly basis and plan their build out schedules accordingly. The Framework states that plans should take account of market signals so we have to listen when developers tell us about their build out rates that they have based on market signals."

Mr Shane Sellers on behalf of Sandra McLeavy asked the following supplementary question:-

"I understand Stockton Council recently reviewed the housing need assessment, is it available to the public?"

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

"I said we have brought forward the housing need assessment but I will try and find out if any papers are available to you."

The following question was asked by Mr Shane Sellers on behalf of Ms Sandra McLeavy for response by the Leader of the Council:-

"Why was it necessary for Save Stockton South to be pressured by Stockton Council into declaring support for the NPPF motion?"

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

"The Council are not pressurising Save Stockton South into supporting the motion but would suggest that it is logical to support the motion if they wish to see the requirement for housing supply levels to be significantly reduced as Ms McLeavy has indicated. The more individuals and organisations that understand the implications the NPPF is having on Council plans the better. This will require a sea change in government policy and can only come about by a review of the NPPF and Government reversing its current position of insisting on Councils meet a hypothetical need in the supply of housing land."

Mr Sellers on behalf of Ms Sandra McLeavy asked the following supplementary question:-

"I would beg to differ and ask that the Leader of the Council come and meet with the residents of Stockton South?"

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

"The offer has been made in the motion that has been agreed for a meeting to take place with the Mayor to meet with petitioners along with the Cabinet member, Chief Executive and appropriate officers.

C
110/13 **Members Policy Seminars**

Consideration was given to a report that provided Council with an overview of content from the Members Policy Seminar in February 2014 which provided an update on the outcome of the Ornamental Areas Bedding Review and the implications for parks, flower beds and open spaces across the Borough.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

C
111/13 **Commemoration of Individuals and Councillors Report**

Consideration was given to a report on the commemoration procedure and the proposed amendment to that procedure to include the posthumous commemoration of Councillors' contribution to the Borough.

The Commemorative Working Group was formed by the Executive Scrutiny Committee in 2008, this forum was established to commemorate the actions of individuals that were either born, lived or worked within the borough and had excelled either locally, nationally or internationally in some way, bringing recognition to both themselves and the borough as a whole.

Supported by the Council's Leisure & Culture Services, who were responsible for the Council's Heritage Strategy, and by Democratic Services, the Group had considered nominations received from the public / elected members to commemorate individuals who, through their actions, had brought recognition to the Borough.

With no available budget as such, commemoration of individuals such as George Stephenson, John Walker, and Dr McGonigle had been achieved through the creation of an on-line Hall of Fame hosted within the Council's website.

The Group allowed Members to decide who / what should or shouldn't be commemorated, using the criteria appended to this report and supported by evidence from the nominator, plus key officers of the Council.

Feedback would suggest that this approach was working and should continue for individuals, however requests had been received over the last few years for the Council to also posthumously commemorate Councillors. Therefore, it was felt necessary and appropriate to formalise the consideration and approval of such requests. The report proposed that following an appropriate period of reflection, consideration of such requests was included in the work of this Working Group. It was suggested that an appropriate length of reflection would be 4 years, signifying the continuing impact of an individual's contributions

across two successive councils.

The criteria used by the Commemorative Working Group determined the significance of an individual's contribution using two criteria and this it was felt would be suitable for the purposes of considering the commemoration of Councillors. The criteria were as follows:-

- (1) Level of importance – their impact or their achievements, and their consequent eminence, being judged locally, regionally, nationally or internationally.
- (2) Relevance to the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees – What is their connection to the Borough?
 - (a) Born or died here only; lived here for a short while, or tenuous Association with the place.
 - (b) Not born here, did not live here, but the work/event for which they are known took place here.
 - (c) Born and/or lived here but the work for which they are known took place elsewhere.
 - (d) Born and/or lived here and the work for which they are known took place here.
- (3) The above categories are listed in order of importance with (a) scoring the lowest and (d) justifying the greatest commemoration. Appendix 1 illustrated the scoring model.

The procedure for considering individuals involved reports being presented to the Group which included the detail of the original request in addition to an objective analysis provided by Stockton Borough Council's Officers.

The Group periodically judged nominations, giving consideration to the level of Importance, relevance to Stockton-on-Tees and the appropriate level of Commemoration.

In terms of the procedure / report to the Group, it was proposed that in the case of Councillors, the report should include an objective analysis, and suggested commemorative options provided by the Relevant Corporate Director/Head of Service for the Group to consider.

With regard to consultation the Members Advisory Panel, at its meeting held on 25th September 2013, endorsed the proposal outlined from paragraphs 5-9 and requested that the matter be referred on to the Commemoration Working Group in order that their views could be obtained, prior to consideration by Cabinet and ultimately Council for approval.

The Commemoration Working Group, at its meeting held on 24th January 2014, also approved the proposed procedure.

Cabinet considered the item at its meeting held on 13th February 2014 and a

copy of the relevant Cabinet minute extract was attached to the report.

RESOLVED that the proposed procedure for posthumously commemorating Councillors, as outlined at paragraphs 5-9 of the report, be approved.

C
112/13 **Council Plan 2014-17**

Consideration was given to a report that presented a draft Council Plan for 2014 - 17 in line with the framework agreed by Cabinet in November 2013, prior to it being submitted for Full Council approval. A copy of the Council Plan 2014 – 17 was attached to the report.

At the Cabinet meeting of 27th November, 2013 Members received information about the context and proposals for developing the Council Plan for 2014 - 2017 and approved the framework.

The Council Plan was last fully reviewed in 2010 and covered the period 2010 - 2013. Subsequent years had seen the plan reviewed based on an analysis of key policy and legislative changes during the preceding year and known forthcoming changes. Since the production of the last Council Plan, the context in which the Council operated had changed significantly in relation to policy, central government relationships and not least the financial climate. The period for the next Council Plan was likely to see further changes in the financial settlement and the impact of the reductions to meet the financial gap would continue to have an impact. The plan had been developed in this context and giving due consideration to the content of the Medium Term Financial Plan.

The context outlined in the following paragraphs provided the basis on which the Council Plan had been reviewed.

As the Council had sought to address the impact of national policies and legislative changes and the changing circumstances in which it delivered its services on the people it sought to serve, a number of local policy principles had been agreed through, for example, approval of the Medium Term Financial Plan, recommendations from Efficiency, Transformation and Improvement Reviews, reports to Cabinet and these had been taken into account in the draft plan.

- Promoting equality of opportunity (focussing in particular on targeted intervention)
- Protecting the vulnerable (focusing on intervention and activity aimed at protecting the vulnerable and being clear about what we mean by vulnerable)
- Developing strong and healthy communities (capturing preventative and universal activity)
- Creating economic prosperity (universal activity) in line with our ambition for economic recovery and growth

There had been significant resource invested in the development of the Council branding which was embedded within all of the corporate communications, linked clearly with the thematic areas within the Council Plan, Cabinet Member portfolios, Scrutiny Committee themes and had served the Council well in terms of resident communication and partner engagement. The draft of the Council

Plan 2014 - 17 did not seek to change or detract from these but to add clarity and focus.

The draft Council Plan retained the ambition the Council had for its residents, businesses and visitor over the medium to long term and provided a framework to support decision-making, resource allocation and as a platform on which to secure external funding. Ambition and vision which had historically resulted in inward external investment, positive inspection outcomes, high levels of resident and business satisfaction and provided strong strategic and community leadership. The draft plan provided an opportunity to restate commitment to the medium - long term ambitions and aspirations, whilst providing a framework to support decision-making, resource allocation, secure external funding and give a clear focus on the shorter term actions.

Since the last Council Plan and during the duration of the next Council Plan significant capacity had been taken out of the organisation and through the implementation of the agreed reviews would continue to do so. The Council Plan 2014 - 17 took both of these factors into account in being realistic and clear about what could be achieved over the duration of the plan.

It was recognised that this was a medium - term plan; in line with the financial planning framework and that circumstances were likely to further change over its duration. Therefore whilst the plan covered the period 2014 - 17 it would be subject to an annual refresh to take account of any changes in policy, legislation or financial circumstances.

It was not the intention of the plan to capture the totality of the Council's business but rather provide a focus on key strategic priorities and activities and provide the framework for reporting to CMT, Cabinet, Executive Scrutiny and Council. The day – to - day business of the Council would continue to feature in the Business Plans within individual Service Groupings.

Whilst it was acknowledged that much of the success of the Council was through its work in partnership with others there was a need, in terms of accountability and transparency, to be clearer about what the Council's plans and priorities were, how it was going to deliver them and how it would know it was doing when set against the context of reducing budgets, growing demographics and increased demand for services.

The Council Plan 2014/17 was in 2 parts. The "front end" set out the Council's overall ambition as detailed below and provided the context in which the Council delivered its services. This was supported by narrative providing information about changing demographics, details of national policy and legislation that had informed the plan, the links to other key strategic plans and strategies and details of the 4 under pinning policy principles referenced at paragraph 4.

"Big Plans, Bright Future

Our ambition is to create a Borough that is more confident, more vibrant and more successful than ever before. A place where people prosper and grow, where people feel happy, safe and healthy. A place where people can see that our drive, our integrity and our imagination have delivered a genuine improvement and exceptional value for money. A place that every single one of

us is proud of”

The second part provided the detailed activity to be undertaken under each of the themes and policy principles. The final version of the plan would include a range of targets on which progress could be monitored and success measured. Officers were developing these targets and Cabinet was requested to delegate the decision on approval of the targets to the Corporate Director for Resources in conjunction with the Leader of the Council.

Briefing sessions had been organised for the 12th and 13th February 2014, for Members to discuss the Council Plan 2014/17 alongside the Medium Term Financial Plan arrangements. Work was also underway to develop an internal performance management database which would provide the opportunity to ‘tag’ the various elements of the plan to support multi-faceted reporting, for example, by theme and / or by policy principle.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The Council Plan 2014 – 2017 be approved.
2. Authority for the agreement of the targets associated with the delivery of the Council Plan be delegated to the Corporate Director for Resources in conjunction with the Leader of the Council.

C
113/13

Motion

The following motion had been submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12.1 by Councillor Michael Clark, and seconded by Councillor David Wilburn:-

“This council acknowledges the excellence of sixth form provision in our local colleges and schools.

It registers its opposition to the proposed 17.5 per cent reduction in funding for students aged over 18 who are in greatest need of support.

It applauds the support given to the schools and colleges by the MP for Stockton North Alex Cunningham and calls on all local MPs to urge the government to rethink this short-sighted and counter-productive move.”

The motion was carried.

C
114/13

Members' Question Time

The Director of Law and Democracy informed Members that no Member Questions had been received.

C
115/13

Forward Plan and Leader’s Statement

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

Cabinet had met on 13th February and considered a wide range of issues, the following significant items were considered in addition to regular items:-

- A report on Great War Commemoration plans
- An update on development in our Town Centres
- The Annual Audit Letter
- A report on the Scrutiny Review of Use of Demographic Information
- A report on the Commemoration of Individuals and Councillors
- A report on the Youth Offending Service Inspection
- The Council Plan for 2014-2017
- An update on Preston Hall
- An update on our Housing Regeneration Schemes
- A report on the Scrutiny Review of the Performance of Housing Providers

Cabinet then met again on 20th February to consider the MTFP for 2014-17, as the Council did on the 26th February to agree the budget and MTFP for the coming financial and Civic year.

Looking ahead to the next Cabinet meeting to be held on 13th March significant items on the agenda to be considered in addition to the regular items were as follows:-

- Children's Social Care Activity and Performance Report
- Procedure for Admission of pupils to Primary and Secondary Schools in September 2015
- Welfare Reform – Transforming Debt Recovery
- Welfare Reform Including Update on Discretionary Housing Payments Policy a Local Tax Support Scheme
- Street Lighting Delivery Programme
- Director of Public Health – Annual Report
- Members Allowances

There were two specialist markets which would be held on the following days in Stockton:-

Saturday 8th March - Kiddiewinks Market in Parish Gardens and Saturday 29th March - Easter Farmers' Market in Wellington Square

Lastly I would also like to congratulate Councillor Nigel Cooke on winning the Scrutineer of the Year Award at the LGIU 2014 Councillor Awards.