At a meeting of the CABINET held in the CIVIC CENTRE (COMMITTEE ROOM NO. 1) on WEDNESDAY, 14TH JANUARY, 2009 at 2.00 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor P. Watson in the Chair

Councillors Allan, Anderson, Blackburn, Charlton, Rolph, P. Smith, Speding, Timmins and Trueman.

In Attendance:-

Councillors Paul Maddison and R.D. Tate.

Part I

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 3rd December, 2008, Part I (copy circulated) were submitted.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Receipt of Declarations of Interest

The following Councillors declared personal interests in the undermentioned reports as Members of the various bodies indicated:-

Item 5 – Holmeside Triangle Site and Ongoing Leisure Uses in The Bridges	Councillor P. Watson	Sunderland Arc
Item 7 – Single Programme Investment Plan for Sunderland 2009/11	Councillor P. Watson	Sunderland Arc, Sunniside Partnership
	Councillor Charlton	Sunniside Partnership

Item 8 – Working Neighbourhoods Strategy – Exception to the Procurement Procedure Rules	Councillors Anderson and P. Watson	Sunderland Partnership
Item 9 – Revenue Budget 2009/2010	Councillor P. Watson	Learning and Skills Council
	Councillor Anderson	South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership Joint Executive Committee (Substitute)
	Councillor Blackburn	Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Authority, South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership Joint Executive Committee
	Councillor Rolph	South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership Joint Executive Committee
	Councillors Allan, Anderson, Charlton, Rolph, P. Smith, Timmins and Trueman	Local Government Pension Scheme
Item 11 – Revenue Budget and Trading Services Third Review 2008/2009	Councillor P. Watson	Sunderland Partnership, Children's Trust, Sunderland Arc, Safer Sunderland Partnership
	Councillor F. Anderson	Sunderland Partnership, South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership Joint Executive Committee (Substitute)
	Councillor Allan	Governor, Sandhill School

	Councillor Blackburn	Street Lighting and Highway Signs PFI, South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership Joint Executive Committee
	Councillor Rolph	South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership Joint Executive Committee
	Councillor Smith	BSF/Academies Working Group, Children's Trust, Early Years and Childcare Strategic Partnership, Corporate Parenting Board, Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board (Observer)
	Councillor Speding	Sunderland Empire Theatre Trust, Raich Carter Centre Management Board
	Councillor Timmins	Healthy City Partnership, Children's Trust
Item 12 – Capital Programme – Third Review 2008/2009 and Provisional Resources 2009/2011	Councillor Smith	BSF/Academies Working Group
Item 17 – School Place Planning for the Future – SEN Special Schools Review of Provision	Councillor Trueman	Governor, Columbia Grange
Item 19 – Wastes Management – Ancillary Procurements	Councillor F. Anderson	South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership Joint Executive Committee (Substitute)
	Councillor Blackburn	South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership Joint Executive Committee

	Councillor Rolph	South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership Joint Executive Committee
Item 24 – Tyne and Wear Bus Corridor Improvement Programme – Proposals for Phase 2 – A183 Chester Road Corridor Improvements	Councillor Blackburn	Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Authority
Item 25 & 33 – Disposal of Land within the Houghton Sports Complex, Brinkburn Crescent, Houghton-le-Spring	Councillor Speding	Sport England
Item 28 – Sunniside Commercial Property Grant Scheme: Proposed Change to the Boundary of the Scheme	Councillors Charlton and P. Watson	Sunniside Partnership
Item 29 – Proposed Signing of the European Commission "Covenant of Mayors" on Reducing Carbon Emissions	Councillors P. Watson, Anderson, Allan, Charlton and Trueman	ANEC

Councillor Speding declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item 32, "Company W – Request for Financial Assistance", as a Member of the Company and withdrew from the meeting during consideration of the report.

Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

Reports of the Meetings of the Personnel Committee, Part I

The reports of the meetings of the Personnel Committee held on 27th November, 12th December, 2008 and 6th January, 2009, Part I (copies circulated) were submitted and consideration was given thereto.

(For copy reports – see original minutes).

2. RESOLVED that:-

(i) the reports of the meetings held on 27th November, 12th December, 2008 and 6th January, 2009 be noted, and

(ii) the revised Use of the Council's ICT Facilities Policy be approved.

Holmeside Triangle Site and Ongoing Leisure Uses in The Bridges

The Chief Executive (Designate), the Director of Development and Regeneration and the Director of Community and Cultural Services submitted a joint report (copy circulated) on the current position with regard to development options for the retail core of the City Centre and proposals in relation to the comprehensive redevelopment of the Holmeside Triangle site and to request that the proposed conditions of an Exclusivity Agreement with Thornfield Properties plc (Thornfield) in respect of the redevelopment of the Holmeside Triangle be agreed.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Charlton reminded Cabinet Members that at the Cabinet meeting on the 3rd December, 2008, it was decided not to proceed with the development of the Crowtree site at this time, and to enter into an Exclusivity Agreement with Thornfield Properties in respect of the development of the Holmeside Triangle site in the City Centre. He added that following that meeting this decision was called in, but that in considering the call in the Policy and Co-ordination Review Committee felt that the Cabinet decision was appropriate and should be implemented.

Councillor Charlton advised that since the Cabinet meeting in December, Land Securities' legal advisors had written to the Council expressing concerns about the Council entering into the Exclusivity Agreement. He added that these concerns were set out, with Officers' comments in the main report circulated for the meeting. He also drew attention to an addendum report which had been circulated to Cabinet, which summarised and addressed the concerns expressed by Land Securities at the meeting referred to in paragraph 3.7 of the main report, which took place last Friday and in the further representation of Land Securities through their legal representatives. He explained that whilst the position taken by Land Securities was understandable as they were a commercial organisation seeking to protect its trading position, their views had to be seen in a wider content. He reported that Holmeside was a large site, it had been in the City's regeneration plans for many years and was the most advanced of the major development sites in the Central Area. He added that there was still a long way to go as these kind of schemes were complex, but on balance, notwithstanding Land Securities' concerns the Exclusivity Agreement would increase confidence in Holmeside without preventing private development elsewhere and allowing modest developments on Council owned sites. Land Securities could be part of that and the Council wanted to continue with its very successful partnership with them.

Cabinet Members having been advised that the Exclusivity Agreement needed to contain reasonable safeguards for the Council should the Holmeside Triangle development not make proper progress, and these would be negotiated by Officers in consultation with the appropriate Portfolio Holders and the Council's interests would therefore be protected, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that:-

(i) the Council does not proceed with the redevelopment of the Crowtree Leisure Centre site at the present time,

(ii) the Council be authorised to complete an Exclusivity Agreement with Thornfield Properties plc in respect of the redevelopment of the Holmeside Triangle site on the basis set out in the report, and delegate to the Chief Executive (Designate) and Director of Development and Regeneration the negotiation of the detailed terms thereof in consultation with appropriate Chief Officers and Portfolio Holders, and

(iii) the Council be authorised to enter into a joint venture or other agreement in relation to the Holmeside Triangle site, if it is considered that this is an appropriate mechanism for taking the Holmeside Triangle development proposals forward and delegate to the Chief Executive (Designate) and Director of Development and Regeneration the negotiation of the detailed terms thereof in consultation with appropriate Chief Officers and Portfolio Holders.

Performance Report April – September 2008 (Progress in Implementing the Local Area Agreement and New National Indicator Set)

The Chief Executive (Designate) submitted a report (copy circulated) on the current position regarding progress in implementing the Local Area Agreement and the new National Indicator Set across the Council for the period April 2008 to September 2008.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Allan highlighted that a new national performance framework was being implemented during 2008/2009 which included 198 new National Indicators to replace the Best Value Performance Indicators and Performance Assessment Framework Performance Indicators. He added that as a consequence 2008/09 was a transition year as the Council developed baselines for the new indicators and ensured any corrective action would be effective in the new framework.

Councillor Anderson referred to the National Indicator relating to the net additional homes provided in the City and requested an update on the position. Councillor Trueman advised that the target which had been set had been very ambitious and affected by the recent economic downturn. He explained that the performance up to the second quarter had increased from 22 to 141 and there were a number of empty homes, ready for occupation, which could not be included in the figures. He added

that in addition a net gain of only 20 new homes had arisen due to the number of demolitions which had taken place.

The Chairman reported that the new framework would be challenging for the Council particularly in current economic conditions. He added the Council through its community leadership role would endeavour to maintain high levels of service, reduce wastage and help protect main employers, such as Nissan, during these difficult times.

The Chairman having drawn attention to the positive performances achieved against a number of targets and having assured the Council's performance improvement would be actively managed, it was:-

4. RESOLVED that the performance of the Council against key performance measures as part of the Council's quarterly monitoring arrangements be noted.

Single Programme Investment Plan for Sunderland 2009/11

The Chief Executive (Designate) submitted a report (copy circulated) on a request by ONE NorthEast for the Council to submit an investment plan with details of its proposals for seeking Single Programme funding for the period 2009/11 by 9th January, 2009.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Charlton reported that the submission of the investment plan was necessary to enable negotiations to commence with ONE NorthEast regarding the continuation of Single Programme funding to support the regeneration of Sunderland. He added that the proposals within the submission were consistent with existing objectives and commitments to promote the regeneration of the City and the City Centre in particular.

Councillor Charlton reported that the investment plan would focus upon priority projects within the arc business plan, including the Vaux Site, Farringdon Row, the Sunderland Strategic Transport Corridor including the proposed new river crossing, Holmeside, Stadium Village including Stadium Park and Sunniside.

He added that emphasis would be placed on securing ONE NorthEast support for the revitalisation of the City Centre with particular attention given to the redevelopment of Market Square and Central Station and the enhancement of the cultural and visitor attractiveness of the City Centre through investment in the Central Library and related facilities.

Cabinet Members having been advised that following the negotiations with ONE NorthEast, a report on the final proposals would be submitted to Cabinet, it was:-

5. RESOLVED that:-

(i) the submission of the draft Single Programme Investment Plan for 2009/11 to ONE NorthEast be endorsed, and

(ii) a further report to approve the final version of the Investment Plan following negotiations with ONE NorthEast be submitted to Cabinet in due course.

Working Neighbourhoods Strategy – Exception to the Procurement Procedure Rules

The Chief Executive (Designate) submitted a report (copy circulated) on the Working Neighbourhoods Strategy which set out the proposed approach to the allocation of the Working Neighbourhoods Fund and a request for an exception to the normal Procurement Procedure Rules for the procurement of the Assisting People into Work Core Management and Delivery elements of the Strategy through the Council's existing Job Linkage partnership.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Charlton reported that under the existing Council arrangements, the Job Linkage service was currently delivered in the City via an established partnership agreement with three voluntary sector service providers. The providers had extensive knowledge of the Job Linkage service, and had been working in partnership with the Council for over 12 years. He added that the current Job Linkage centres were staffed by a combination of Council-employed and voluntary-sector employed staff and the current partnership was able to combine the strengths of both and demonstrate its ability to deliver on a wide range of employability and training targets.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

6. RESOLVED that approval be given to award the Assisting People into Work Delivery Programme through the existing Job Linkage partnership between the Council and the following three voluntary sector organisations: Sunderland North Community Business Centre (SNCBC), New View and GATES for a period of two years, pursuant to the Council's Constitution Part 4, Section 7, Paragraph 5.4(d).

Revenue Budget 2009/2010

The Chief Executive (Designate) and the City Treasurer submitted a report (copy circulated) on the provisional budget proposals for 2009/2010, as a basis for the continuation of budget consultation, prior to the receipt of the final Local Government Finance Settlement 2009/2010.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Allan highlighted the provisional budget proposals which had been a difficult process during the economic downturn and had been subject to a wide range of pressures. He was pleased to report that the proposals provided key priority services with a minimum burden on the Council Taxpayer. Further consultation would be undertaken with stakeholders and it was anticipated that Sunderland would continue to have the lowest Council Tax in the region.

Councillor Allan having congratulated the City Treasurer and Portfolio Holders on the excellent report, it was:-

7. RESOLVED that it be recommended to Council that:-

(i) the report for the calculation of the Tax Bases for the City Council and Hetton Town Council for 2009/2010 be approved, and

(ii) that pursuant to the report and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992, as amended by Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2003 the amount calculated by Sunderland City Council as its Council Tax Base for the year 2009/2010, shall be £80,089, and for the area of Hetton Town Council shall be £4,032.

Revenue Budget and Trading Services Third Review 2008/2009

The City Treasurer submitted a report (copy circulated) detailing the outcome of the Revenue Budget and Trading Services Third Review for 2008/2009.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Allan highlighted the report and drew attention to contingency transfers which had been necessary in respect of fuel and energy price increases and also in relation to the interim pay award of 2.45% which had been implemented pending the outcome of the arbitration process.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

8. RESOLVED that the contingency transfers and budget transfers proposed at Appendices B and C of the report be approved.

Capital Programme – Third Review 2008/2009 and Provisional Resources 2009/2010

The City Treasurer submitted a report (copy circulated) to detail the outcome of the Third Review of the Capital Programme for 2008/2009 and provisional resource allocations for 2009/2010 and to seek specific approval to the proposed changes to the Capital Programme since the Second Capital Programme Review 2008/2009.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Allan reported that since the Second Capital Programme Review was reported to Council in October 2008, there were proposed changes to the Capital Programme both in terms of expenditure and resourcing to reflect additional funding approvals to incur expenditure that had been received from Government and other agencies. In addition changes arise as the phasing of schemes was reviewed. He added that the impact of those changes had led to the 2008/2009 capital programme decreasing by £2.094 million from £123.322 million to £121.228 million.

The attention of Cabinet Members having been drawn to a summary of the schemes and variations and it having been noted that each Cabinet Member had been briefed on their Portfolio Area, it was:-

9. RESOLVED that:-

(i) in relation to the Third Review of the Capital Programme 2008/2009:

(a) approval be given, and where necessary it be recommended to Council, to include additional schemes for 2008/2009 detailed at Appendix A and associated resourcing of the Capital Programme since the Second Review of the Capital Programme was reported to October Cabinet;

(ii) in relation to the Capital Programme for 2009/2010:

(a) approval be given to the allocation of resources as set out in paragraph 6, subject to any adjustment when final announcements are made;

(b) it be noted that Cabinet Members with Portfolios for areas covered by the Children's Services, Adults, Housing, Highways and Other Services Blocks will consider any proposals for new starts based on resource allocations outlined in paragraph 6 in order to incorporate proposed new starts in the Capital Programme to be presented to Cabinet in February 2009.

Corporate Risk Profile

The City Treasurer submitted a report (copy circulated) on the updated Corporate Risk Profile and amendments that had taken place and to seek endorsement of the amendments proposed and the recommended actions set out in the Profile.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Allan reported that only two major changes had been made to the Corporate Risk Profile in relation to the Sunderland Strategic Transport Corridor and the onset of the current international financial markets crisis.

Cabinet Members having commended the review process, it was:-

10. RESOLVED that the updated Corporate Risk Profile and amendments that have taken place be noted and the recommendations set out in the Profile be endorsed.

Commissioning Short Break and Personal Support Services for Disabled Children

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to advise of:-

(a) the procurement arrangements in relation to the delivery of short break and personal support services for disabled children;

(b) plans to allocate the Aiming High for Disabled Children funding;

(c) proposals for the capital element of the funding;

and to seek approval for:

(a) the arrangements for the procuring of short break and personal support services to disabled children; and

(b) the awarding of contracts to independent sector providers for the provision of specific services as outlined in the report.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Smith highlighted the report and reported that the proposals would enable Children's Services to procure additional short break and personal support services with independent sector providers to meet the needs of the most severely disabled children in Sunderland.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

11. RESOLVED that approval be given to the:-

(i) arrangements for the procuring of short break and personal support services to disabled children; and

(ii) awarding of contracts to independent sector providers for the provision of short break and personal support services to disabled children.

Capping Fees for Personal Community Development Learning Programmes (PCDL)

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) on recommendations for capping the amount of fees that any one individual would be

expected to pay during the academic year in respect of the fees policy to support the delivery of Personal Community Development Learning (PCDL) programmes.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Smith having requested that the item be withdrawn from the agenda to allow further consultations to be undertaken, prior to re-submitting it back to Cabinet for consideration, it was:-

12. RESOLVED that the item be withdrawn from the agenda.

Children Looked After (CLA) Prevention and Placement Strategy

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) on a review of the progress of the Children Looked After and Placement Strategy (2004 – 2009) was agreed by Cabinet on 7th April 2004, which identified opportunities for reconfiguration of services for looked after children; and to make proposals to further streamline and improve residential services.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Smith reported that changing the use of the two children's homes to become homes for adults with learning disabilities was consistent with the overall strategy of reducing the proportion of children looked after in residential care. The two homes selected had the fewest residents, the highest unit costs, and the children currently resident could be moved on appropriately in a planned way. She explained that the Children Looked After Placement Strategy had resulted in improved outcomes for children and young people.

Cabinet Members having welcomed the proposals, it was:-

13. RESOLVED that approval be given to:-

(i) the change of use of two of the Council's children's homes, Wendover Close and Meadow Rise, which currently provide residential care for young people with additional needs. Both homes will in future be managed by the Council's Health, Housing and Adult Services Directorate and provide long-term residential care for adults with learning disabilities, and

(ii) the achievement of improved outcomes arising from this Strategy and the plans to improve and refurbish three other children's homes which are owned by the Council be noted.

School Place Planning for the Future – SEN Special Schools Review of Provision

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide feedback on the responses to the consultation meetings that took place in October 2008 and to seek approval to publish statutory notices in line with the proposals set out in the report.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Smith highlighted the report and reported that current designations did not wholly reflect current and future need for provision for pupils and the responses to the consultation showed strong support for the proposed revised designations.

Councillor Smith having assured Cabinet Members that no child would be displaced from their current provision, it was:-

14. RESOLVED that:-

(i) the consultation responses be noted, and

(ii) progression to the publishing of statutory notices for re-designation of Barbara Priestman and Sunningdale Schools and Portland College be approved.

Sunderland Seasonal Lifeguard Service

The Director of Community and Cultural Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to seek approval to begin a tendering process to procure the services of an external organisation to deliver the beach lifeguard service at Seaburn and Roker from the months of May to September for a five-year period from 2009.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Speding having reported that the Royal National Lifeguard Association were successfully providing lifeguard operations to over twenty other Local Authorities in England, it was:-

15. RESOLVED that the tendering for lifeguard services be approved as set out in the report of the Director of Community and Cultural Services.

Wastes Management – Ancillary Procurements

The Director of Community and Cultural Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to confirm revised arrangements for the ancillary contracts for waste management with the introduction of initial contracts for a term of three years from April 2010 with options for a series of one year extensions thereafter (prior to the

award of contracts for the previously agreed periods); and to seek approval to subject those initial contracts to a competitive tendering exercise.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Rolph highlighted the report and drew attention to the shape of the new waste collection arrangements. She reported that the proposals would provide the Council with maximum flexibility, efficiencies and cost effectiveness as not all the ancillary contracts ended at the same time and would achieve the long term objectives of the Waste Management Strategy.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

16. RESOLVED that:-

(i) amendments to the proposed contract periods be approved to provide for an initial term of 3 years (prior to the award of contracts for periods of 10 years as previously approved) for:

(a) Recycling of Dry Recyclables (Materials Recycling facility); and

(b) Green waste recycling (without food waste); and

(ii) the procurement of necessary landfill arrangements for an initial period of 3 years be approved,

(iii) all proposed contracts allow for a series of up to three one-year extensions beyond the initial contract term in order that arrangements and facilities will be available in the event of any delays in the commissioning of strategic sub-regional waste treatment facilities, and

(iv) a competitive tendering exercise in respect of the proposed contracts be approved.

Neighbourhood Renewal and Regeneration: Acquisition of Land at Hetton Downs – Funding Agreement

The City Solicitor and the Director of Health, Housing and Adult Services submitted a joint report (copy circulated) to advise of potential funding arrangements in relation to the acquisition of properties in the area of Hetton Downs which had been identified as a priority area for renewal and regeneration purposes and to approve the execution of a Funding Agreement.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Trueman reported that English Partnerships, part of the Homes and Communities Agency, had expressed a willingness to provide funding to the Council to enable it to achieve its and the Council's neighbourhood renewal proposals and targets for the Hetton Downs area.

Councillors Anderson and Speding congratulated the Portfolio Holder and the Directorate for acquiring the funding for the regeneration of the area and other similar successful schemes in areas across the City.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

17. RESOLVED that the execution of a Funding Agreement between the Homes and Communities Agency and the Council be authorised in a form to be agreed by the City Solicitor and the Director of Health, Housing and Adult Services, to enable the Council to acquire properties in Hetton Downs in accordance with neighbourhood renewal plans.

Development of a Core and Cluster Scheme for People with Long-Term Conditions, (Long-Term Physical Disabilities)

The Director of Health, Housing and Adult Services and the Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a joint report (copy circulated) on a proposal to procure a development partner to develop a Core and Cluster Scheme for people with long-term conditions.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Timmins reported that since the previous Cabinet report when it was agreed to demolish Redcar House, it had become inhabited by bats and subject to an arson attack. It was proposed that since there were no alternative service delivery requirements for the site and that it was not the best location for a Core and Cluster Development, an alternative location with greatest need for such accommodation had been identified as Washington.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

18. RESOLVED that the procurement of a development partner to develop a Core and Cluster Scheme be approved, subject to a further report detailing the preferred development partner and approval of the financial implications in due course.

Washington Village Conservation Area: Character Appraisal and Management Strategy

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) on the outcome of consultations on the draft 'Washington Village Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Strategy' and to seek approval to adopt the revised document as formal Planning Guidance.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Blackburn reported that in helping to safeguard the City's heritage, the Appraisal and Strategy satisfied the Council's various conservation obligations and duties and the document, adopted as Planning Guidance, would also help to satisfy the Council's performance requirements for the current financial year. He drew attention to similar reports being presented in respect of the Cedars Conservation Area, Whitburn Bents and Houghton, which were subsequently adopted. He added that the Washington Village document followed the same format as the previous ones and was the seventh in a series of such documents being prepared for the City's 14 Conservation Areas.

Councillor Blackburn advised that the aim of the Strategy was to increase awareness and appreciation of the Conservation Area's special qualities and provide the Council with an appropriate basis for the control of development in the Area. He added that this was considered especially important as in recent years the special historic character of the Area had increasingly come under pressure, particularly for buildings alterations and extensions. The Management Strategy in particular established objectives and proposals to secure the future preservation and enhancement of the Conservation Area's special character. These included measures to protect key buildings, features, spaces and views.

Cabinet Members having been advised that the document had been subject to public consultations and had been modified in light of the responses received and once adopted, would strengthen Council policy for the Conservation Area, help to protect its best features and provide a basis for its enhancement, it was:-

19. RESOLVED that:-

(i) the outcome of consultations on the draft 'Washington Village Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Strategy' be noted, and

(ii) the revised Character Appraisal and Management Strategy be adopted as formal Planning Guidance.

Use of Framework Consultants for Transport and Engineering Services

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) to seek approval to extend the current engineering consultants framework contracts for two years.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Blackburn reminded Cabinet Members that in April 2005, Cabinet approved the appointment of two firms of consulting engineers on a two year term contract, with an option to extend for a further two years, to assist in the delivery of transport and engineering services. He added that in February 2007 under delegated powers, Faber Maunsell and Jacobs were appointed to assist in this regard. He reported that the framework arrangements were due to expire in February 2009 and given the anticipated workload and resources there would be an

ongoing need for external assistance. The effectiveness and quality of the frameworks had been monitored and this had shown satisfactory or good performance.

Cabinet Members having been advised that the proposed terms of the extension represented good value for money, it was:-

20. RESOLVED that:-

(i) the use of Faber Maunsell to provide engineering services under the current framework contract for a further two years in accordance with current procedures be approved, and

(ii) the use of Jacobs to provide transport engineering services under the current framework contract for a further two years in accordance with current procedures be approved.

Tyne and Wear Bus Corridor Improvement Programme – Proposals for Phase 2 – A183 Chester Road Corridor Improvements

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) to seek approval of the outline proposals for Phase 2 of the Tyne and Wear Bus Corridor Improvement Programme.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Blackburn reported that the Major Scheme Business Case for this second phase, which was for improvement to the A183 Chester Road Corridor was expected to be submitted to the Department for Transport by Nexus in summer 2009, and subject to approval, work could start on site during 2011/12. He added that the aim of the project was to reduce congestion, improve bus journey times and pedestrian facilities, and reduce delays at junctions for all traffic on the corridor. Complementary improvement measures, funded through the Local Transport Plan, were programmed to be carried out on site between Woodville Crescent and the City Centre over the next few months.

Councillor Blackburn reported that the cost estimate for the project was £12.2 million at current prices, which included an allowance for risks and the project would result in significant investment in the City's transport infrastructure. He referred to consultation that had taken place with local Ward Members and Stakeholders, and feedback was supportive. He added that it was proposed to consult members of the public, including frontage owners, local businesses and transport users, during the early part of 2009.

Councillor Blackburn advised that the report also informed Cabinet that Phase 1 of the Bus Corridor Improvement Programme which comprised improvements to the Wheatsheaf and Stadium Way junctions was submitted to the Department for Transport by Nexus in December 2008, and that feasibility work was to continue on the remaining Phases of the bus corridor improvement project. He added that

further reports would be brought forward on the current phase as the scheme was developed.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

21. RESOLVED that:-

(i) the outline proposals for Phase 2 (A183 Chester Road Corridor Improvements) of the Tyne and Wear Bus Corridor Improvement Programme Major Scheme Business Case be approved, and

(ii) the progress on the consultation regarding the outline proposals for the Phase 2 project be noted.

Proposed Disposal of Land within the Houghton Sports Complex, Brinkburn Crescent, Houghton-le-Spring

The Director of Development and Regeneration and the Director of Community and Cultural Services submitted a joint report (copy circulated) to seek approval to the disposal of the Council's freehold interest in 1.29 hectares or thereabouts of land within Houghton Sports Complex, Brinkburn Crescent, Houghton-le-Spring to the Sunderland Teaching Primary Care Trust (STPCT).

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Allan reported that the Sunderland Teaching Primary Care Trust had sought to purchase an area of land within Houghton Sports Complex to develop a Primary Care Centre (PCC) to be the fourth and final development to provide City-wide coverage of PCC facilities. He advised that the land was under-utilised and formed part of the existing car park, a disused, surfaced playing area, disused tennis courts and amenity grassed areas and that the proposed development was considered acceptable in principle subject to a formal planning application being submitted.

Councillor Allan reported that there was also the future prospect to link the PCC development and the Sports Centre to enhance the services offered to the community and to make best use of joint management arrangements for community services and reception functions. He added that the price which had been provisionally agreed with the District Valuer acting on behalf of the STPCT represented best consideration. Precise details of the boundary of the land to be purchased could not be finalised until detailed design had been completed. It was therefore proposed that following the completion of this detailed work the Director of Development and Regeneration, in consultation with himself as Portfolio Holder for Resources, be authorised to agree the precise boundary of the land to be disposed of.

Councillor Allan reported that the TPCT had requested that in the unlikely event that planning permission was not obtained for its development, the Council agreed to buy back the land on the same terms. This was considered to be a reasonable request

and was in the best interests of both parties. It was thereof recommended that in the event that the TPCT did not obtain planning permission for its proposal, the appropriate Officers be authorised to acquire the land back from the TPCT on the same terms and conditions as agreed for the disposal, less the Council's reasonable costs.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

22. RESOLVED that approval be given for the disposal of the Council's freehold interest in 1.29 hectares or thereabouts of land within Houghton Sports Complex, Brinkburn Crescent, Houghton-le-Spring to the Sunderland Teaching Primary Care Trust for the price set out in the report on Part II of the agenda and otherwise on terms to be agreed by the Director of Development and Regeneration.

Bridge Structural Maintenance Capital Programme 2008/09 and 2009/10: Proposed Works above the Bridges Shopping Centre

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) to seek approval for a bridge structural maintenance scheme at the Bridges Shopping Centre, to be carried out during 2008/09 and 2009/10 and jointly funded with Land Securities.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Blackburn reported that routine inspections had identified that structural maintenance was required to bridges carrying access roads over the roof of the Bridges Shopping Centre. He advised that resources had now been identified to carry out the work to the bridges as part of the Council's Capital Programme and Land Securities was willing to fund repairs to the areas which were its responsibility. He added that the estimated total cost was £290,000 and the total cost to the Council after Land Securities' contribution was estimated at £113,000.

Cabinet Members having been advised that it was planned to carry out the work over 2008/09 and 2009/10, commencing in March, 2009, it was:-

23. RESOLVED that approval be given for a structural maintenance scheme to be carried out and funded over 2008/09 and 2009/10 at an estimated total cost of £290,000.

Port of Sunderland – Award of Charter Contract for Dredging

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) on a decision to award a charter contract for dredging works as a matter of urgency for the Port of Sunderland pursuant to Paragraph 5.4(g) of the Council's Procurement Procedure Rules.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Allan highlighted the report and explained that it was evident from soft market testing that the costs of dredging had escalated significantly and that dredgers would not be available until Spring 2009 at the earliest. He added that these circumstances would have had a negative impact on Port business and options were therefore reviewed.

Councillor Allan reported that in order to protect the Port's trading position an accelerated procurement process was undertaken as a matter of urgency so as to secure a dredger exercise and at the lowest cost possible. He added that using the Port's dredging consultants to assist with a competitive tender and the appraisal of bids, a company had been appointed to commence dredging this month. The company was able to offer a dredger early in January as a result of the postponement of a contract elsewhere.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

24. RESOLVED that the decision made to award a charter contract to Rohde Nielson for dredging works at the Port of Sunderland, and the circumstances that gave rise to the use of the urgency powers as set out in Paragraph 5.4(g) of the Council's Procurement Procedure Rules be noted.

Sunniside Commercial Property Grant Scheme: Proposed Change to the Boundary of the Scheme

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) to seek approval to a proposal to change the boundary of the Sunniside Commercial Property Grant Scheme (SCPGS) to make all properties in Sunniside eligible for SCPGS grant for the remainder of its period of operation to March 2010.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Charlton reminded Cabinet Members that in December 2007 Cabinet approved a third phase of funding for the Sunniside Commercial Property Grant Scheme and to extend the lifetime of the scheme to March 2010. He reported that the scheme was one of a number of activities set up by the Sunniside Partnership to help the Council to assist businesses, sustain existing jobs, prevent further deterioration of the existing property stock, encourage greater market confidence, and improve the type, quality and mix of development.

Councillor Charlton advised that this phase was funded by ONE NorthEast in the sum of £490,000, made available on condition that the area of operation of the scheme be substantially reduced to focus on a small core of buildings around Sunniside Gardens. At the time there was confidence that the funding would be taken up within the lifetime of the scheme. He added that over the past year the property market had been in decline due to the economic downturn, although there had been some interest in the grant scheme across the wider Sunniside area. If the core operating area was retained, it was likely that the funding would not be taken up and regeneration ambitions would not be realised within the programme of the

scheme. Accordingly, ONE NorthEast had agreed with the Council that all properties within the defined Sunniside area should once again be eligible for assistance.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

25. RESOLVED that the proposed change to the boundary of the Sunniside Commercial Property Grant Scheme to expand its area of operation back to its original extent be approved.

Proposed Signing of the European Commission "Covenant of Mayors" on Reducing Carbon Emissions

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report (copy circulated) to seek agreement to sign the European Commission's "Covenant of Mayors" which committed the City to reducing its carbon emissions by 20% by 2020.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Blackburn highlighted that Climate Change was a major global challenge, and Sunderland had already shown it was committed to playing its role in addressing this issue, nationally and internationally. He reported that the City was already supporting EU climate change initiatives, having recently signed the EUROCITIES Declaration on Climate Change, following the adoption of Sunderland's Climate Change Action Plan in November 2008. He added that the "Covenant of Mayors" was a more ambitious EU Commission initiative that aimed to join the leaders of Europe's most pioneering cities in a common approach to reducing carbon emissions and creating low-carbon business and economic development.

Councillor Blackburn reported that the Association of North East Councils had invited all Local Authorities in the North East of England to consider signing the "Covenant of Mayors", making the North East region the only UK region to do so, which would raise the region's profile in Europe considerably. He added that signing the Covenant of Mayors committed Sunderland to submitting a Sustainable Energy Action Plan by January 2010, which sets out actions to reduce CO_2 emissions by more than 20% by 2020, reported on every 2 years.

Cabinet Members having been advised that the Council and Sunderland Partnership had recently adopted a Climate Change Action Plan for 2008-2022 and that the Action Plan provided the means to meet all three requirements of the "Covenant of Mayors", it was:-

26. RESOLVED that the signing of the European Commission's "Covenant of Mayors" be approved.

Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006

At the instance of the Chairman, it was:-

27. RESOLVED that in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 the public be excluded during consideration of the remaining business as it was considered to involve a likely disclosure of information relating to any individual, which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual, the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information) or to consultations or negotiations in connection with labour relations matters arising between the Authority and employees of the Authority (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4).

(Signed) P. WATSON,
Chairman.

Note:-

The above minutes comprise only those relating to items during which the meeting was open to the public.

Additional minutes in respect of other items are included in Part II.