

Local Government Act 1972

Borough of North Tyneside

13 March 2014

At the meeting of the Council of the Borough of North Tyneside duly convened and held on Thursday 13 March 2014 in The Chamber at Quadrant at which a quorum of Members were present, that is to say:

Present

Councillor Janet Hunter (In the Chair)
N Redfearn (Elected Mayor)

Councillor A Arkle	Councillor C Johnson
Councillor A Austin	Councillor D W Lilly
Councillor K Barrie	Councillor F Lott
Councillor G Bell	Councillor W Lott
Councillor B Burdis	Councillor G Madden
Councillor C Burdis	Councillor M L Madden
Councillor W Caithness	Councillor P Mason
Councillor K A Conroy	Councillor Mrs P McIntyre
Councillor D E Corkey	Councillor J McLaughlin
Councillor A Cowie	Councillor A McMullen
Councillor S Cox	Councillor L Miller
Councillor E N Darke	Councillor Mrs S E Mortimer
Councillor L Darke	Councillor T Mulvenna
Councillor C Davis	Councillor A Normand
Councillor S Day	Councillor P Oliver
Councillor M Finlay	Councillor D Ord
Councillor R Glindon	Councillor K Osborne
Councillor S Graham	Councillor C B Pickard
Councillor M A Green	Councillor J Pickard
Councillor J L L Harrison	Councillor D Sarin
Councillor S Hill	Councillor L Spillard
Councillor E F J Hodson	Councillor J Stirling
Councillor John Hunter	Councillor A Waggott-Fairley
Councillor M Huscroft	Councillor J I Walker
Councillor M J Huscroft	Councillor Mrs J A Wallace
Councillor N J Huscroft	Councillor G Westwater

In attendance via Skype in a non-voting capacity: Councillor J Munby

C123/03/14 Public Questions

1. The following question was asked by Mr Brockbank of Whitley Bay:

Can the Elected Mayor assure residents that no Council premises is ever used by the Labour Party for party political meetings, which I understand contravenes Council policy?

The Elected Mayor replied as follows:

Council premises which are available for paid hire may be hired by members of the public, Members of the Council, groups and others, for any reasonable purpose, subject to compliance with the Council's current conditions of hire. This could include use for private political group or constituency meetings.

I'm not aware of any circumstances where Council resources have been used other than in accordance with these provisions.

2. The following question was asked by Mr R Underwood of Forest Hall:

Would the Elected Mayor please tell me how she helped our young and elderly people with the £10,000 she promised?

The Elected Mayor replied as follows:

Thank you for your question I would be delighted to inform Council how the £10,000 that I donated from my allowance has been used to help both our younger and older people in the borough.

The £5,000 allocated to the Young Mayors budget, was given to replace the budget that had been reduced by the previous administration. The £5,000 has been used to help support the following activities.

- Funding a group of young people with additional needs, called the Getting A Life group, visit to Beamish.
- Helping North Shields Juniors to buy football equipment.
- Funding towards Whitley Bay Gang Show.
- Supporting the development of a new award for schools to increase their involvement in the Young Mayor elections.
- A team building activity for new Youth Councillors and the Young Mayor to plan for their year ahead.
- A youth exchange with Norwegian young people.
- Supporting a group of young women who wanted to get involved in celebration of International Women's Day.

With regards to the £5,000 allocated towards older people, I hosted a Christmas party for 120 residents from our sheltered housing schemes on 13 December 2013. This was to thank them for their patience in waiting for the new sheltered housing schemes and also to celebrate the return of their much needed wardens.

It was a fantastic day which was very much enjoyed by our older people.

The Elected Mayor read out the contents of letters received from two residents who wished to convey their thanks for organising the party and their appreciation of the efforts that had gone into ensuring the day was an enjoyable experience for all concerned.

For those residents who were unable to make the Christmas party boxes of biscuits were delivered to their Sheltered Housing Schemes.

Any savings from the £5,000 donated this year will be transferred into the following year's budget to help support further activities and different groups of residents in the future.

Mr Underwood asked the following supplementary question:

Can you confirm please, was it before or after tax you gave the £10,000?

The Elected Mayor replied as follows:

The tax was taken off my salary straight away. I don't know what you are getting at.

3. The following question was asked by Mr A C Elliot of West Moor:

How much will it cost Marden Bridge Middle School to take over the running of Marden Bridge Sports Centre?

The Elected Mayor replied as follows:

The Council and Marden Bridge Middle School are committed to ensuring that the sports centre continues to offer a wide range of activities to benefit all residents. It was disappointing that the previous administration reduced the Council's contribution to Marden Sports Centre in their 2013/14 budget proposals. However, we are working together on a business plan to ensure that the long term goal for the sports centre is sustainable.

4. The following question was asked by Mr G Partis of West Monkseaton:

The camera car was introduced to monitor illegal parking outside schools and in bus stops. Can the Elected Mayor tell me if its use has been extended beyond those areas and if so, how much in fines has been charged for offences in any new areas?

Councillor F Lott replied on behalf of the Elected Mayor as follows:

The premise on which the question is based is false. North Tyneside commenced use of the CCTV vehicle in 2012 under the previous administration. The camera car is a key element in ensuring the safe and efficient operation of the road network by deterring motorists from breaking road traffic regulations. It allows enforcement on difficult or sensitive areas or where on foot enforcement is not practical.

Within the Borough the CCTV vehicle is primarily used to enforce restrictions outside schools, bus stop clearways, delivery vehicle only loading bays and keeping clear approaches to crossings.

In accordance with legislation, restrictions are enforced in areas where parking abuse creates a significant safety concern. These areas include school keep clear zones, bus stops, pedestrian crossings or crossing areas marked by zigzags and restricted streets where waiting and loading and unloading restrictions are in force, e.g. yellow lines with associated kerb blips.

As such, the question is based on the wrong premise. There has been no change in the operation of the camera car.

5. The following question was asked by Mr F Austin of Whitley Bay:

As of 1 April Northumberland County Council are suspending parking charges throughout the county in order to encourage tourism and increase footfall in their town centres, thus supporting local businesses and small traders. Will the Mayor show her support for the businesses and traders of North Tyneside by adopting a similar policy?

Councillor F Lott replied on behalf of the Elected Mayor as follows:

I'm curious as to how Mr Austin considers the suspension of all parking charges as an incentive to tourism or an encouragement to increase footfall in our town centres. Comparisons with Northumberland are unrealistic. Northumberland is a largely rural area; North Tyneside is significantly urban and with many of our areas, particularly Whitley Bay, serving as dormitory towns for people working in Newcastle.

There are many differences between Northumberland and North Tyneside, but the most significant one in this context is the Metro. Can I ask you to consider for a moment the locations of the Metro stations at Whitley Bay, North Shields as well as Tynemouth perhaps? If we did as Mr Austin suggests I bet overnight these town centres will become a vast free car park for commuters travelling to Newcastle with vehicles parked in front of shops and other businesses from 8.30am to 5.30pm, in other words throughout the normal payment period. In fact in all the years of working with businesses and small traders, only once has this suggestion been put to me.

In my meeting with Whitley Bay Chamber of Commerce on Tuesday evening it was agreed that the Council should end free parking which people have been availing themselves of just outside Whitley Bay Metro Station. It was relayed at that meeting that at least one person had parked outside the Metro Station free of charge for two days while they commuted to London. So, I think that this, to be honest, is a ludicrous suggestion, but nevertheless, the Environment Scrutiny Committee has agreed to undertake an examination of all car parking matters including charges and permits in the new Municipal Year.

6. The following question was asked by Mrs G Barrie of North Shields:

Can the Mayor tell me how many agency social workers will be required to meet the Council's statutory obligations in protecting children given recent cuts to that service?

Councillor L Spillard replied on behalf of the Elected Mayor as follows:

The Council's statutory obligations to protect children is being met by the social work team who have permanent contracts with the Council.

We have increased the number of Family Partners, as part of the continued investment in early help and support services to work with vulnerable families whose children may become looked after and / or suffer harm had we not made this investment.

The situation of social work caseloads is routinely monitored and, as reported to Council, the Cabinet Member also receives routine reports on workload and will be advised accordingly as to caseload size and any actions required to deal with unexpected rises in these caseloads.

Mrs Barrie asked the following supplementary question:

Whilst considering the financial costs of these proposals, can the Mayor give an absolute guarantee that no child will suffer significant harm or worse due to these cuts?

Councillor Spillard replied as follows:

We will endeavour to ensure every child is safe in North Tyneside. However, no-one can ever 100% guarantee that no-one will come to harm from others because we cannot be with a child twenty four hours per day. What we will do is ensure caseloads are programmed for social workers to be able to carry out their duties and be as sure as we can possibly be about child safety.

C124/03/14 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Allan, P Brooks, I Grayson, D McGarr, J O'Shea and M Rankin.

C125/03/14 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest reported.

There were no dispensations in relation to registerable personal interests reported.

C126/03/14 Minutes

The Chair announced that a minor correction was required to the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2014. The correction was as follows:

In Minute C117/02/14, page 4, line 5 to replace the words 'Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning' with the words 'Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care'.

Resolved that subject to the above correction, the minutes of the Extraordinary meeting held on 23 January 2014; the Ordinary meeting held on 23 January 2014; the Extraordinary meeting held on 6 February 2014 and the reconvened Extraordinary meeting held on 20 February 2014, be taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chair.

C127/03/14 Motions

No Motions were received for consideration at this meeting.

C128/03/14 Pay Policy Statement 2014/15

The Council received a report seeking approval for a Pay Policy Statement 2014/15 as set out in Appendix 1 to the report. The Localism Act 2011 required the Council to agree an annual pay policy which set out how pay structures and salaries were determined and what remuneration packages existed for the Authority's senior workforce in relation to the rest of the workforce.

A Member asked if figures were available in relation to the difference between the median average salary and the remuneration of the lowest paid employees.

The Deputy Mayor confirmed that there was no requirement to publish this information but details could be circulated to all Members.

It was moved by Councillor B Pickard and seconded by Councillor F Lott that:

Council approves the Pay Policy Statement for 2014/15, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, and authorises publication of the Pay Policy Statement on the Council's Website.

The motion, on being put to the meeting, was agreed by 49 votes to 1 vote.

C129/03/14 Safer North Tyneside Community Safety Strategy 2014-2019

The Council received a report seeking approval for the Safer North Tyneside Partnership's Community Safety Strategy 2014 – 2019 as set out in the draft Strategy at Appendix 1 and in the Action Plan at Appendix 2.

The Council was a 'responsible authority' under this statutory partnership.

The Community Safety Strategy formed part of the Authority's Policy Framework and in accordance with the Policy Framework Procedure Rules contained in the Constitution, any objections to the Cabinet's final proposals must be submitted no later than 4.00pm on 12 March 2014. No objections had been received.

In response to Members' queries, the Cabinet Member for Community Engagement indicated that she would provide a written response in relation to the impact on the plans by the proposed closure of Whitley Bay Police Station; the level of support available to perpetrators of anti-social behaviour who have mental health issues in the light of the higher threshold being introduced in the CAMHS service; and the response times for types of crime other than hate crime.

The Elected Mayor also indicated that she would be prepared to write to the Home Office and to the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria to express concerns about the reduction in Government funding for policing in the Northumbria Force area.

It was moved by Councillor C Burdis and seconded by Councillor B Pickard that:

Council agrees the final proposals in respect of the Community Safety Strategy 2014-2019 in the form of the draft Strategy attached at Appendix 1 and Action Plan attached at Appendix 2.

The motion, on being put to the meeting, was approved by 50 votes to 0 votes.

C130/03/14 Common Seal

Resolved that the Common Seal be affixed to all deeds and documents required for carrying into effect the various decisions of the Council made since its last meeting.

C131/03/14 Chair's Announcements

The Chair advised Council that Paul Cook, Head of Safeguarding and Preventative Services, had recently left the Council and that she had written to Paul on behalf of all Members to thank him for his services to the Council.

She also informed Members that a charity ceilidh event would be held on Friday 21 March 2014 at The Lindisfarne Social Club, West Street, Wallsend from 7.30 pm, and all were welcome.

C132/03/14 Mayor's Announcements

The Council was advised that the Mayor had met with senior Police Officers and she had been assured that Whitley Bay Police Station would not be closing until suitable premises were found in the heart of the Town.

C133/03/14 Questions by Members of the Council

1. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor D Lilly:

Can the Elected Mayor confirm the PFI repayment in respect of the John Willie Sams Centre?

Councillor R Glindon replied on behalf of the Elected Mayor as follows:

The payments made to the third party who constructed the Centre and who provides the maintenance service for the building and pays for the lifecycle costs for any equipment that needs to be replaced have been as follows :-

2007-08: £59,635
2008-09: £744,000
2009-10: £744,000
2010-11: £781,000
2011-12: £814,000
2012-13: £845,000
2013-14 to January 2014: £728,000

By the end of 2013/14 we will have paid £4,864,279 since the facility opened in March 2008. As part of the PFI type scheme delivered through the NNT LiftCo contract the Council receives £611,000 per annum from Government towards these costs. This payment is in the form of a grant and therefore does not have to be repaid by the Council.

Councillor Lilly asked the following supplementary question:

How can you justify spending taxpayers' money supporting the Centre which only generates £46,000 per year and costs £750,000 per year when you are withdrawing funding for Marden Bridge Sports Centre which only costs the Council about £8,000 per year to support?

Councillor Glindon replied as follows:

It was built some years ago. I can't compare it with Marden Bridge Sports Centre, all I'm saying is that at the time it was considered to represent value for money. The Auditors thought it was a good way of going ahead. I can give you some comparisons. The John Willie Sams Centre is broadly £32 per square foot; Shiremoor Resource Centre is £42 per square foot; and Whitley Bay CFC is £30 per square foot.

The Chair of Council had agreed to group together questions 2 and 3, to which a combined response would be given, Councillors Austin and Westwater would each have the opportunity to ask a supplementary question.

2. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor A Austin:

Can the Elected Mayor confirm that staff at Marden Bridge Sports Centre will be re-located without any jobs being lost?

3. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor G Westwater:

Can the Elected Mayor tell me what will happen to Marden Bridge Sports Centre if Marden Bridge Middle School cannot take over total responsibility from the Council for running the Centre?

The Elected Mayor replied to questions 2 and 3 above as follows:

As I have already said this evening, the Council and Marden Bridge Middle School are committed to ensuring that the sports centre continues to offer a wide range of activities to benefit all residents. It was disappointing that the previous administration reduced the Council's contribution to Marden Bridge Sports Centre in their budget proposals, as you will be well aware Councillor Westwater you were one of the ones that signed this off, however, we are working together on a business plan to ensure that the long term goal for the sports centre is sustainable.

Councillor Austin asked the following supplementary question:

If the staff are being redeployed, how is that a saving when the wage bill is still being picked up by the Council and how many staff will still be employed?

The Elected Mayor replied as follows:

I have already answered that question. I said we are still working with the School to come up with a sustainable plan for that Centre. I don't know what the staffing arrangements are, but as soon as I do, I will let you know.

Councillor Westwater asked the following supplementary question:

What guarantee can you give that the Centre will remain open?

The Elected Mayor replied as follows:

I will guarantee that it will remain open.

4. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor L Miller:

This winter the south of England and Wales have been subjected to major storms and devastating flooding and this Borough has suffered similarly in the recent past as well. What steps is the Elected Mayor taking to upgrade flood prevention plans?

Councillor J Harrison replied on behalf of the Elected Mayor as follows:

The flooding in recent years has had a devastating impact on communities in North Tyneside. As such, the Council is working hard to reduce the risk of flooding in the Borough. A dedicated surface water team is currently working through a £4.75 million programme of drainage schemes which will significantly reduce the risk of flooding to hundreds of homes and businesses.

This work is being co-ordinated through the North Tyneside Surface Water and Drainage Partnership which brings together the Council and our partner organisations such as the Environment Agency and NWL.

Councillor Miller asked the following supplementary question:

Precisely how is the Mayor upgrading the flood prevention plans in the light of the winter's experience?

Councillor J Harrison replied as follows:

There was a substantial amount of flooding particularly in the Southern part of the Borough. We are continuing with the Partnership, we have put an extra £1m into the budget and we are working closely with our communities and our partners.

On 5 and 6 December there was a tidal surge along the coastline and because of the organisation we had in place, we prevented substantial damage to a significant number of properties. It is the Mayor's commitment, and the commitment of Cabinet and I hope of the Council also to work with our partners to work towards preventing the devastating impact floods can have on our communities, and it is one where we want to work with our partners, we want to try to ensure we have sustainable communities and to co-ordinate as much money as possible to help alleviate any problems or concerns. The Partnership will continue, and it is seen as a good example and one which we can all be proud of.

5. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor J McLaughlin:

The Council has, in the past, expressed interest in becoming a bulk purchaser of energy on behalf of the Borough and passing on the economy of scale savings to residents and businesses. What progress has the Elected Mayor made to introduce such a scheme?

Councillor J Stirling replied on behalf of the Elected Mayor as follows:

Further to the response provided to Councillor Ed Hodson's Council question in November 2013, I can further update Members on progress made in this area. The Council is working with a consortium of Housing Associations and Local Authorities across the region to explore the potential for bulk purchasing energy from the wholesale market and supplying it to local residents. A specialist consultant has been engaged by the consortium to analyse options. We expect to receive a report outlining options available to us with recommendations later this month.

In addition to this, I'm pleased to inform Council that a report will be presented to Cabinet on 7 April seeking approval for the Council's participation in the national Local Government Association procured collective energy switching scheme. This is a national energy switching scheme that will be available to all households in the Borough.

I'm sure Council will agree this clearly demonstrates our commitment that we are doing everything we can to help North Tyneside residents lower their fuel bills.

Councillor McLaughlin asked the following supplementary question:

What steps is the Mayor taking to raise awareness of social responsibility so that people are encouraged to reduce their impact on climate change and dependency on carbon fuel. Energy costs continue to increase so what actions are being taken to expedite the introduction of such a scheme?

Councillor Stirling replied as follows:

I've already answered the second part. In a previous energy switching scheme, the average saving in energy costs per household was around £122 per year. We have actively been working with Warm Zone to raise awareness and we have alleviated fuel poverty by installing new insulation and new boilers for people who can't afford to put them in.

We have put in £400,000 and £100,000 worth of measures into people's homes and we've also looked at people's benefit maximisation. I think we're up to around 2,800 maximised fuel benefits. This is a new addition which only came in the last 6 months.

6. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor E Hodson:

Could the Elected Mayor explain how she will represent the Borough in the new Combined Authority when it discusses transport?

The Elected Mayor replied as follows:

The Combined Authority when established will have appointed to it the Leaders or in the case of North Tyneside Council the Elected Mayor from each of the seven Constituent

Authorities. Each Leader and the Mayor will appoint a substitute member to act as a member of the Combined Authority in their absence.

Insofar as the transport functions of the Combined Authority are concerned, certain functions will remain with the Leadership Board of the Combined Authority, such as the setting of transport levies and the adoption of any local transport plan. It is anticipated that one of the Leaders/Mayor will be the Thematic Lead for Transport. This means that he or she will assist with the development of options and policies for consideration by the Leadership Board of the Combined Authority for transport related matters.

Transport functions not reserved to the Leadership Board will either be delegated to:-

- a) A joint transport committee known as the Transport North East Committee which will have delegated to it by the Leadership Board certain transport functions. It will also make recommendations on specific transport matters referred to it by the Leadership Board. Any transport functions that are the responsibility of the Committee will be for the whole of the combined area;
- b) A sub-committee of the Transport North East Committee known as the Transport North East (Tyne and Wear) Sub-Committee which will deal exclusively with Tyne and Wear Authority transport issues including the monitoring, supervision and performance monitoring of Nexus; or
- c) To the respective Executives of Durham County Council or Northumberland County Council so that the County Councils can continue to perform operational transport functions in their areas on behalf of the Combined Authority.

It has not yet been determined who will be the Transport Thematic Lead for the Combined Authority.

In terms of who represents North Tyneside Council in relation to transport issues at the Combined Authority, it will be the Elected Mayor for those transport functions reserved to the Leaders and Mayor, and Councillor Lott as the member with portfolio responsibility for transport who it is anticipated will be appointed to both the Transport North East Committee and the Transport North East (Tyne and Wear) Sub-Committee.

The Constitution of the Combined Authority will set out the transport functions that are the responsibility of the Combined Authority and how those transport functions not reserved to the Leadership Board will be delegated.

7. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor E Hodson:

The Elected Mayor is the Council's representative on the Newcastle Airport Board. Could she let us know her ambitions for the Airport and the earnings expected to flow to the Council, in the near future.

The Elected Mayor replied as follows:

My ambition is to have a prosperous and efficient airport for the North East at Newcastle Airport. In a report to Cabinet on 24 October 2012 the future ambitions of Newcastle International Airport were highlighted. The aim of the Airport is to grow the business through an increase in both aeronautical and non aeronautical revenue. There is a

recognised need to link Newcastle to 'Hub' airports in Europe such as Frankfurt as well as an aim to provide a direct link to America.

I fully support these ambitions.

As part of the debt refinancing of the Airport in 2012, a loan was provided to the Airport by the other six local authority members of LA7 (excluding North Tyneside Council). As it was agreed that the repayment of loan notes would be prioritised over the payment of any distributions to shareholders in LA7, however a dividend was declared in 2013/14. North Tyneside Council's share was £0.285m. This is held in the Strategic Reserve. If any dividend is declared by the Airport in the future, this would be accounted for as additional income to the Council which would be transferred into the Strategic Reserve in the first instance.

Councillor Hodson asked the following supplementary question:

Is the Mayor satisfied that the Council's investment is under satisfactory control and if so how is she sure?

The Elected Mayor replied as follows:

I actually attended a meeting at the Airport last week with the Board. We were given a presentation on where we are now with the Airport and on future plans. It was very positive and the future developments planned are exciting. It stands us all in good stead for the future. I will send a copy of the presentation to all Members.

8. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor P McIntyre:

The Council has responsibility for reducing carbon emissions across the whole Borough – as a duty set out in the Mayors' Covenant to which the Council is a signatory.

The Council has, in the past, expressed support for the supply of geothermal heating of factories and residences in the Borough. What progress has the Elected Mayor made to fast track this important carbon saving project?

Councillor J Stirling replied on behalf of the Elected Mayor as follows:

I have already met, along with officers, the potential developer of the geothermal heat network and a potential distributor of the heat. During this meeting the Council requested that the potential developer submit a full business case as the Council would be unable to proceed without knowing the full financial implications to the Council.

Councillor McIntyre asked the following supplementary question:

Newcastle City Council are well ahead with such a scheme. Can the Cabinet Member generate some energy for this himself?

Councillor J Stirling replied as follows:

Newcastle was a pilot scheme and they were given a lot of money to do it. This government is putting nothing into this sort of thing at the moment. On top of that they cut the feed in tariff which makes it less viable.

9. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor P Mason:

Can the Elected Mayor tell us what independent valuations were obtained for the Wallsend Town Hall and the former Police station in Wallsend prior to the sale of the former and purchase of the latter?

Councillor J Harrison replied on behalf of the Elected Mayor as follows:

The Council utilised its partner, Capita, and the purchaser used an external Chartered Surveyor to obtain independent valuations of the Town Hall. The value of the Town Hall was assessed at £200,000, taking into account a condition survey undertaken by external consultants in 2012. This assessed the cost of repairs and maintenance works required to the main Town Hall Building over the next five years to be in excess of £861,000, with an additional £506,000 of expenditure required beyond that.

The purchaser's valuation report also confirmed the value at £200,000 in a report dated 7 February 2014. This valuation was in line with the Authority's own valuation and was considered to be robust. Both the in-house and external valuation would have been undertaken in accordance with the usual surveyors' professional standards.

In December 2013 Adavo Property acquired the police station for the amount of £200,000 following a competitive bidding process.

With respect to the value of the police station Capita and the external surveyors both agreed that the 2013 selling price of the police station was the most reliable evidence that could be used to assess its value.

Councillor Mason asked the following supplementary question:

I didn't quite get how many valuations there were and they were done rather quickly so did they provide good value?

Councillor J Harrison replied as follows:

Yes, it was good value and it had to be done speedily. This is why we have our partners Capita who have that professionalism behind them and the purchaser used an external Chartered Surveyor to come up with a value of £200,000 for the Town Hall and £200,000 that we paid for the police station. This will allow us to develop the whole of that area of Alexander Street across into the car park to build and develop affordable homes. Affordable homes are something we are keen to develop in the next ten years. The Mayor has an ambitious target of 3,000 affordable homes, but one we think is achievable. This is part of the regeneration of that part of Wallsend and we will ensure we get the right homes in the right places and tidy up that area. It makes good business sense to swap to allow the old Town Hall to be used as a business centre and at the same time allow us to develop homes. In 2014/15, we are looking to build in the region of 262 affordable homes, the following year 319 and the year after 411, until we achieve those 3,000 affordable homes in the next ten years. This gives us an opportunity to build homes, tidy up that part of the Borough and create a proper business centre as I have outlined.

10. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor P Mason:

Would the Elected Mayor clarify whether Council house tenants are paying for a full time trade union representative from the Housing Revenue Account?

Councillor B Pickard replied on behalf of the Elected Mayor as follows:

I'm surprised that Councillor Mason would ask this question as he was for two years the previous Cabinet Member for Housing.

This Council conforms to the law on trade union recognition and also the ACAS code of practice on time off for trade union duties. The cost of agreed facility time for Branch Officers of the Authority's recognised trades unions is centralised and recharged out to the relevant budgets on an annual basis.

The Housing Revenue Account is charged a proportion of this cost depending upon the number of trade union members employed in jobs which are funded from the Housing Revenue Account.

Councillor Mason asked the following supplementary question:

What hours does the trade union representative work at the expense of the Council?

Councillor Pickard replied as follows:

They work the contractual hours for the Council unless they're on a part-time basis and for each case they have been agreed according to the arrangements put in place and conditions of employment set down.

11. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor M Finlay:

We have previously agreed that training, education and research would be fundamental to supporting the new technologies we want to see establishing themselves on the riverside. There is no reference to the hoped for "Learning Village" in the Jupiter Park site. Can the Mayor explain what support is going to be offered for education and training at levels 3 to 5 and beyond in the Swans site (Jupiter Park)?

Councillor F Lott replied on behalf of the Elected Mayor as follows:

It continues to be a priority to link training, education and research to the new technologies and businesses that will be located on the Swans site. Whilst the concept of a Learning Village is a great way to describe the training and education offer we are mindful to develop a fit for purpose, sustainable infrastructure that fully benefits North Tyneside residents and pupils. That is why we are working in partnership with Tyne Metropolitan College and others to increase the availability of skills provision at all levels including levels 3-5 and beyond. This provision will directly link to employment opportunities on the Swans site. These include:

- Creation of an employer led engineering academy-led by Chirton Engineering
- Supporting Tyne Metropolitan Colleges engineering provision
- Newcastle College's ENRGI Centre
- Tyne North Training and TDR training as specialist engineering providers

Our partnership work with businesses is leading to increased delivery of level 3 – 5 skills across the borough.

In terms of support for research facilities the former Swans building will be refurbished to host small businesses that could include Research and Development businesses.