

Local Government Act 1972

Borough of North Tyneside

24 July 2014

At the meeting of the Council of the Borough of North Tyneside duly convened and held on Thursday 24 July 2014 in The Chamber at Quadrant at which a quorum of Members were present, that is to say:

Present

Councillor T Mulvenna (In the Chair)
N Redfearn (Elected Mayor)

Councillor J M Allan	Councillor N J Huscroft
Councillor A Arkle	Councillor C Johnson
Councillor Mrs A Austin	Councillor D W Lilly
Councillor K Barrie	Councillor F Lott
Councillor G Bell	Councillor W Lott
Councillor L Bell	Councillor G Madden
Councillor W Caithness	Councillor P Mason
Councillor J Cassidy	Councillor D McGarr
Councillor KA Conroy	Councillor J McLaughlin
Councillor D E Corkey	Councillor A McMullen
Councillor S L Cox	Councillor L J Miller
Councillor EN Darke	Councillor Mrs S E Mortimer
Councillor L Darke	Councillor P Oliver
Councillor C Davis	Councillor D Ord
Councillor S Day	Councillor K Osborne
Councillor P Earley	Councillor J O'Shea
Councillor R Glindon	Councillor C B Pickard
Councillor S Graham	Councillor J Pickard
Councillor I Grayson	Councillor M Reynolds
Councillor M A Green	Councillor D Sarin
Councillor M Hall	Councillor L A Spillard
Councillor J L L Harrison	Councillor J Stirling
Councillor Janet Hunter	Councillor A Waggott-Fairley
Councillor John Hunter	Councillor J I Walker
Councillor M Huscroft	Councillor Mrs J A Wallace
Councillor M J Huscroft	Councillor G C Westwater

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

C21/07/14 Public Questions

1. The following question was asked by Mrs Reay of Whitley Bay:

The North Tyneside schools review - the council website information says that phased implementation of any changes will start in September 2015. Is this still the case or has this date changed?

Councillor I Grayson replied on behalf of the Elected Mayor as follows:

Following Cabinet's decision in October 2013 to review education in North Tyneside, a report is expected to be brought forward in September 2014. That will ask Cabinet to approve options for consultation. Consultation will begin once that approval is given.

If any changes are proposed and agreed, they will not begin to be implemented until at least September 2015.

2. The following question was asked by Mr Cowen of Whitley Bay:

Does the Mayor agree that streets in North Shields town centre, particularly William Street, Stanley Street, Saville Street West and Rudyerd Street have been neglected by the Council for a number of years and the condition of the roads and pavements, the amount of litter and weeds and the lack of trees seriously damages the image and reputation of the town, is an embarrassment to both the residents of North Shields and the Council and this neglect clearly demonstrates a complete disregard for the town by the Council compared to other areas within North Tyneside such as Cullercoats, Tynemouth, Whitley Bay and Monkseaton?

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

No, I don't think it's fair to say these areas have been neglected.

The roads and pavements, the streets referred to are inspected every 6 months. The latest inspection revealed that whilst the area is showing signs of deterioration it does not warrant extensive repairs. We will of course continue to address localised repairs that are identified during our regular highway inspections.

In relation to litter, I can confirm that a daily litter sweep takes place in Saville Street West and Rudyerd Street (town centre location). William Street and Stanley Street receive a weekly litter sweep. Over recent months, parked cars have caused some access problems for the street cleaning team. The cleansing programme has therefore been reviewed and sweeping is now being carried out in the evening, which is improving access and making a difference.

In terms of weed growth earlier in the season, we have experienced a significant amount of growth due to the warm and wet weather. More recent drier conditions have enabled the weed control contractor to start bringing the weeds back under control.

On the point relating to trees, I think they are important for our town centres in that not only do they release oxygen into the air, absorb carbon dioxide and filter out

pollutants, they add to people's quality of life and well being and enhance visitors' perceptions of the Borough.

3. The following question was asked by Mrs Hall of Whitley Bay:

Is the Council liable to cut trees down that they own if they are causing light issues and television interference to a number of people on a residential site in North Tyneside?

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

We are obliged by law to have policies in place to achieve sustainable development and environmental protection. In doing so we have developed our local Biodiversity Plan with tree management an integral part of that Plan.

A North Tyneside Tree Management Policy has been agreed and revised in 2010 and forms part of the Plan. Within the Plan we lay out the various aspects of how we will manage our trees in North Tyneside. A key part of that is quality of life considerations. We look at the blockage of light, television reception and damage to footpaths and also lighting aspects. In the first instance we will ask residents to arrange for their reception apparatus to be moved if this is more effective than longer term tree pruning. Where it is not possible for the apparatus to be moved, or the movement of such equipment is ineffective, and/or if there is physical contact between the tree and the aerial/dish then arrangements may be made for appropriate tree works to be carried out to alleviate the problem.

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

Many people walk from the Fish Quay area into North Shields town centre. Does the Mayor agree that there are insufficient toilet facilities for the public following the closure of the public conveniences on Saville Street and would she consider re-opening these toilets in the future.

The Elected Mayor replied as follows:

This is the second time this question has come to Council and I would just like to repeat that the Saville Street toilets were closed following a decision by the previous administration, not by me.

I was asked by some residents to make sure that there were toilets opened and I did open them following a number of concerns raised by residents.

This toilet facility will remain open whilst discussions continue with the owners of the Beacon Centre on their plans to improve the shopping centre and provision of public toilets. Public toilets are available within the Customer First Centre during opening hours, these facilities include a Changing Places toilet as well as two public facilities at the Fish Quay.

Mrs Barrie asked the following supplementary question:

I appreciate there are toilets at the Fish Quay and the Library. The context of the question was the distance people have to walk between the Fish Quay and the

Library which is too far. Would the Mayor consider installing a superloo or getting the toilets that are there reopened?

The Elected Mayor replied as follows:

Yes, I will certainly consider that.

5. The following question was asked by Mr D Owen of North Shields:

As we have in the North East a fantastic car manufacturing industry which has brought thousands of jobs to our local area, does the Mayor agree with the comment made by Councillor Lott at the recent North East Combined Transport Meeting that “if we have a public enemy No 1 now, it is the motor car”?

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

The comment that I am attributed to have made was made in a transport meeting. I have made this or a similar comment in at least two transport meetings and that indicates the context in which this remark was made and should be set.

In both meetings I went on to explain that it is not actually the car that is the real enemy but our society’s attitude and over-reliance on the car, which has resulted in more cars being on the road than is necessary and than is comfortable. (Councillor Lott illustrated this point by referring to his father receiving three visitors on one occasion during a recent stay in hospital, each of whom had taken a car to the hospital).

There are now 31 million cars on the road in the UK emitting 60 million tonnes of carbon dioxide per year. Every year 200,000 people are injured and 2,000 people die on our roads in the UK. There are major health concerns linked to car usage including pollution and the overuse of cars has been directly linked to obesity. Medical research shows that each additional kilometre walked per day reduces the likelihood of obesity by nearly 5%, whereas each additional hour spent in the car increases the likelihood of obesity by 6%. Fuel prices have doubled in the last 10 years and 44%, nearly half, of all journeys to primary school are by car despite the majority of these being located within a short walking distance to the school.

Furthermore, it is becoming increasingly evident that we do not have enough space to park all of the cars that all of the people bring to the places they want to be, whether that be the coast, our town centres or even the streets where they live.

Regarding the car manufacturing industry, I know and appreciate that there are an estimated 28,000 people employed by Nissan and its supply chain in the North East. The industry is a large provider of jobs in North Tyneside with local companies in the Nissan supply chain and beyond with our businesses supplying anything from the manuals for Jaguar Land Rover cars to components for McLaren Formula One cars.

This Administration is supporting those businesses. The Council’s business team is helping the Borough’s employers win new contracts and to access funding to grow. North Tyneside is also a key area for new business investment with its locality to the Nissan site and the successful business and industrial parks. The Council is

actively seeking inward investment opportunities and, in fact, is hosting a UK Trade and Industry event targeted at foreign motor industry investment representatives with Combined Authority colleagues in a couple of months time.

I think that if the car is public enemy number one, we should observe the instruction given in the Bible 'Love thine enemy'.

6. The following question was asked by Mr A O'Brien of North Shields:

As Northumberland Park in North Shields is due to re-open soon after work is completed with a £2.2 million Parks for People grant, I would like to ask the Elected Mayor are there any plans by the Council to put dog restrictions on the park to make this a better environment for children and families?

Councillor E N Darke replied on behalf of the Elected Mayor as follows:

When Northumberland Park reopens in the Autumn, it will have the benefit of a dedicated parks team part funded through the Heritage Lottery Fund. This will result in a greatly increased staff presence, ensuring a more managed and better environment for all our park users.

In relation to restrictions for dog owners, park wardens will ask owners to be responsible if they believe the dog is causing a nuisance. I will ask officers to review the situation once the park has been operational for a while and if dog owners are not being responsible I will look at other measures including the possibility of putting a ban in place. Of course, no dogs will be allowed in the play areas.

I can also inform Council we are considering reviewing dog control measures in parks, however, this will be subject to full public consultation prior to any decisions being made.

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

A recent article in The News Guardian mentions a joint initiative between the Police and North Tyneside Council entitled "Operation Respect" with its aim being to target anti-social behaviour and crime that is having an adverse effect on residents.

A quote from a Council officer states "North Tyneside is a wonderful place to live, work and visit and we will not allow a minority to spoil it".

At this point in time there are four separate locations within Whitley Bay where residents and business people alike are having their daily lives disrupted by extreme anti-social behaviour and crime related incidents, their complaints are being largely ignored, particularly by Council officers.

I would like to ask the Elected Mayor if she will agree to meet with those residents and business people that are being affected and listen to their concerns personally?

The Elected Mayor replied as follows:

I am always happy to meet residents and listen to their concerns and that's why I regularly hold listening events in various locations across the Borough for this purpose. I'm therefore somewhat concerned to hear that there are some residents who feel they are being ignored and Mr Austin, if you would like to provide me with details of these complaints and the officers involved after the meeting then I would be happy to investigate this and if necessary deal with this through the Council's complaints procedure.

However, I do know we have three very active councillors in Whitley Bay and an active police force who they meet regularly. We also have a very active safer estates team and I am proud of the work they carry out on behalf of this Borough. So I am really anxious to know who these people are so we can meet them and look at their complaints, and invite the ward councillors and the police to the meeting.

C22/07/14 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B Burdis, C Burdis, E Hodson, M Madden, P McIntyre and M Rankin.

C23/07/14 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest reported.

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

C24/07/14 Minutes

A query was raised regarding the accuracy of Minute C15/06/14 (Report on the appointment of Section 151 Officer) from the Annual meeting held on 5 June 2014 in relation to the reference to Senior Leadership Team governance arrangements.

The Chief Executive indicated that a note relating to the governance review would be circulated to all Members tomorrow.

It was moved and duly seconded that:

'the Minutes of the Annual Council meeting held on 5 June 2014 be taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chair.

The Motion, on being put to the meeting, was approved by 36 votes to 10 votes.

[Councillor Wallace requested that it be recorded that she voted against the Motion regarding the confirmation of the minutes].

C25/07/14 Motions

No Motions were received for consideration at this meeting.

C26/07/14 Standards Committee Annual Report and Appointment of Independent Persons

The Council received a report which presented the work of the Standards Committee from 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014 and the action plan/work programme of the Standards Committee for 2014/15; and sought approval for the extension of the appointments of Ms Stella Gardner and Mr George Clark as the Authority's Independent Persons, pursuant to the requirements of the Localism Act 2011. The Authority's current Independent Persons had been appointed by Council in 2012.

It was moved by Councillor C Johnson and seconded by Councillor D Corkey that:

'Council:

(1) notes and receives the Annual Report /Work Programme of the Standards Committee for 2014/15; and

(2) approves the extension of the appointment of Ms Stella Gardner and Mr George Clark as Independent Persons, pursuant to the requirements of the Localism Act 2011, for a further period of 2 years to July 2016.'

The motion, on being put to the meeting, was unanimously agreed.

C27/07/14 Licensing Act 2003: Cumulative Impact Policy

A report was received to enable Council to consider the adoption of a Cumulative Impact Policy for a specified area of Tynemouth which, if agreed, would form part of the Statement of Licensing Policy which had come into force on 23 January 2014. If adopted, the Cumulative Impact Policy would have the effect of creating a rebuttable presumption that any application for a premises licence or club premises certificate allowing alcohol sales or supply for consumption on the premises (or for any substantive variation to these) within that area would be refused.

It was moved by Councillor J Harrison and seconded by Councillor S Day that:

'Council:

(a) approves the adoption of the Cumulative Impact Policy for the area of Tynemouth as delineated on the plan at Appendix 1 to the report and agrees its incorporation into the Statement of Licensing Policy approved by Council on 23 January 2014; and

(b) agrees that the Policy, if adopted, will have application to any premises in the area specified at Appendix 1 holding either a premises licence or a club premises certificate permitting the sale or supply of alcohol for consumption on the premises'.

The motion, on being put to the meeting, was unanimously agreed.

C28/07/14 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.

C29/07/14 Chair's Announcements

No announcements were reported on this occasion.

C30/07/14 Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor advised Council of some good news items that had occurred in the last few months, including:

- new jobs coming to North Tyneside, as set out in the leaflet celebrating North Tyneside Business Parks success that had been circulated around the Chamber;
- on 7 July the Government had announced North Tyneside's share in a series of 'Growth Deals' worth £112m, secured by North East Local Enterprise Partnership. The Mayor referred in particular to the receipt of £8 million for the Swans site to infill the redundant wet berth to open up more space for employers linked to the offshore and renewable energy sector, and £1 million to create a newly refurbished Science, Technology and Engineering and Mathematics and Innovation Centre in adjacent premises at Tyne Met College in partnership with the Council. She also referred to funding for key road schemes that would support the borough's plans to attract investment and create jobs including funding for the A19 Employment Corridor (Silverlink North) and the A1056-A189 Weetslade roundabout that would support Indigo Park, the Borough's new business park;
- the Council had secured a total of £18 million of funding so far to support the delivery of the Swans project. This included money to deliver essential infrastructure improvements and business incubator funding, including from the European Regional Development Fund, Homes and Communities Agency and the North East Local Enterprise Partnership Growing Places Fund. The Mayor thanked staff for their hard work to secure this funding;
- the many emails the Mayor had received from residents, businesses and visitors congratulating the Council on the Mouth of the Tyne Festival. The Mayor indicated that this was the first year no complaints had been received about the Festival and she thanked all staff involved in helping to make the event such a success.

C31/07/14 Questions by Members of the Council

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

Will the Mayor undertake to allow the people of North Tyneside a referendum on the continuation of the Mayoral System before the next Mayoral Election is scheduled to take place?

The Elected Mayor replied as follows:

This has been asked before and I have said yes, we'll have a referendum. Before I was elected this was one of the promises I gave to residents and I think it would be foolish of me not to have a referendum, because as politicians we are trying to build trust and I will never go back on my word, so yes Councillor, there will be a referendum.

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

In a few weeks time a referendum will be held to decide whether Scotland should leave the United Kingdom or remain within it. Has the Elected Mayor given consideration to this matter and how the outcome might affect North Tyneside?

The Elected Mayor replied as follows:

I'm aware of the impact that Scotland leaving the United Kingdom could have. This is why it was important to join with other local authorities to have a strong voice for the North East and if you remember some of your people weren't very keen on that alignment last year, but never mind we have that now.

As a member of the Association of North East Councils (ANEC), an independent report has been commissioned to consider the implications resulting from greater Scottish autonomy. The report has been produced by Durham University, Northumbria University and IPPR North by interviewing stakeholders on both sides of the border. This group included MPs, Council Leaders, businesses and civil servants. The full report entitled 'Borderlands' is available on the ANEC website.

In summary, the report indicates that:

- There are economic and social challenges irrespective of the outcome of the referendum.
- There are opportunities for the North East, Cumbria and Scotland to work more collaboratively on Transport, Energy, Tourism, Rural Development, Business Development, Education and Skills.
- The importance of considering the offer that the North East could make to Scotland in the face of the continuing dominance of London and the South East.

Already the North East Chamber of Commerce has organised meetings between leaders and business people. In fact there's one at the end of August at Slaley Hall for officers and business people from Scotland to meet colleagues from the North East to talk about the way forward regardless of the outcome of the referendum.

Councillor Lilly asked the following supplementary question:

Do you agree with a recent Labour Party report that stated separation would have a significant detrimental impact on this region's economy?

The Elected Mayor replied as follows:

As far as I'm concerned, the referendum will take place and we'll have to deal with whatever happens. Many people in the North East are concerned if this goes ahead, but all I'm saying is that whatever the outcome we will have to make it work to make it better for the North East. I have talked to residents and businesses and they are really concerned about what might happen and as far as I'm concerned we are here to represent

the North East and we have to take on their concerns, but should it happen we'll have to find ways to make it happen to the benefit of our people.

3. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor K Barrie:

Can the Elected Mayor tell us which Cabinet Member signed off the contract for the pavement work on Hartington Road, carried out over Easter weekend, and what quality standards and checks by officers were agreed prior to signing the contract?

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

This was standard operational work managed by the Council's Highway Maintenance Team and did not require specific approval from a Cabinet Member.

I am pleased to say as Cabinet Member that we have a resurfacing programme to 2014/15 which gives us in the region of over £3 million worth of work to be carried out in North Tyneside.

Unfortunately at Hartington Road the company, who were sub contracted by Capita, undertook the resurfacing work without an adequate amount of advance preparation. The company has accepted liability and has agreed to undertake substantial remedial work which is planned to take place soon. They have not and will not be paid until the work has been completed to the Council's satisfaction.

Like yourself, I am not satisfied at the way they approached the activity and the way they did the job and we'll keep a close eye on it.

Regarding standards, the standards that we use are laid out in our Highways Asset Management Plan and our Network Recovery Plan.

Councillor Barrie asked the following supplementary question:

Can you supply me with dates on which this is going to happen so that I can inform the residents?

Councillor Harrison replied as follows:

The remedial works will start next week. Our North Tyneside crew will go in and look at it. They need a minimum of two weeks notice from the contractor, and the works will take six weeks to be done.

I can't give you an exact date for the contractor going into it, but when I get the date I can let you and the rest of the Council know.

4. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor K Barrie:

Can the Elected Mayor tell me when the new Kiosk in Cullercoats Harbour is to be installed?

Councillor Barrie advised Council that he wished to withdraw this question.

5. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor D Sarin:

Could the Elected Mayor give Council an update on the position of timescales and budget for work being carried out in Tynemouth Crematorium, as many residents believed that the work would be completed by now?

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

One of the first things that this Cabinet discussed on taking office was that there had been a delay by the previous administration in taking any action in relation to Tynemouth Crematorium. We understood the importance of this issue and therefore we brought it to the Council.

Therefore I'm pleased to report that we have now picked up this issue and are ensuring that the crematorium is fit for purpose not only for today but taking this into future years. The refurbishments are on target to be completed for Winter 2014, with a target completion date of December of this year. This is in accordance with the timescale provided in the Council report of 23 January 2014.

Councillor Sarin asked the following supplementary question:

You say on target. Do you mean time wise/budget wise?

Councillor Harrison replied as follows:

Yes it is. You are probably aware that officers from Environment and Leisure attended a Community Conversation in Preston Ward on 2 December 2013, to consult on plans for Tynemouth Crematorium. Ward Councillors and residents were informed at that meeting that it would take approximately nine months to carry out the work. It is on target, within budget and will meet the timescales required.

6. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor D Sarin:

Can the Elected Mayor tell me if there has been a change in policy about consulting residents where a change of use is proposed for property in a residential area?

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

A protocol explaining the neighbour notification process relating to planning applications was subject to discussion with the former Cabinet Member of the previous administration in 2012 and published in 2012. There has been no change in the Council's policy since its publication in 2012.

Councillor Sarin asked the following supplementary question:

Would the Mayor agree that when ward councillors – I refer to Councillors Davis and Osborne – are aware of an issue which will potentially have a huge adverse impact on the residents of the ward they represent then they have a duty to inform those residents at the earliest opportunity and not collude with stakeholders in keeping matters from residents? I myself had no knowledge of this controversial issue until returning from holiday to a torrent of phone calls and emails.

Following advice given by the Head of Law and Governance, Councillor Sarin agreed to withdraw the question and indicated that he would pursue the matter through the correct channels.

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

The Government has introduced a new Right to Build initiative. Will the Elected Mayor put North Tyneside forward to be one of the vanguard councils for this initiative?

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

Having discussed this matter with officers, we are not proposing to put North Tyneside forward to be one of the vanguard councils for the Right to Build – Custom and Self build initiative, although we will continue to see how the scheme develops following these vanguard trials.

The rationale for this is that there is currently low demand for self build housing in North Tyneside compared with other housing tenures. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2013 identified only 5.6% of residents were interested in self-build housing and overall, less than 1% of households contacted thought that they are most likely to move to a self-build property.

However, in order to support residents who do wish to self-build, the Council is proposing a requirement, subject to further consultation in the planning policy DM7.8, that 10% of sites are to be set aside for self-build on schemes of 200+ homes.

The Council is committed to increasing the number of affordable homes in the borough and will deliver 3,000 homes in the next 10 years. Where small sites of land have been identified, the Council is looking to encourage development by small local builders and is currently working with small builders in the area to assist them in setting up a Small Builders Co-operative. This would see an economic benefit to the local area in terms of employment and supply chain, as well as contributing to the supply of new affordable homes.

Councillor Mason asked the following supplementary question:

Is it possible to put that into the forthcoming Local Plan?

Councillor Harrison replied as follows:

What I want to put into the Local Plan, as I have suggested, would be a policy regarding the numbers of sites that can be used for self build, although there doesn't appear to be much demand.

I can take further advice on this, but as I suggested our statistics are saying to us that there's not a great demand for self build and therefore I didn't wish to pursue that route. However I will be putting policy DM7.8 into our new Local Plan in setting aside 10% of sites for self build schemes.

8. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor J Wallace:

Would the Elected Mayor agree with me that it should be clearly explained to children and young people that every day they attend school or college is important for their education and prospects in adult life?

Councillor I Grayson replied on behalf of the Elected Mayor as follows:

Of course we agree.

Councillor Wallace asked the following supplementary question:

Will the Mayor therefore condemn the recent strike action that was taken which deprives children and young people of their education?

Councillor I Grayson indicated that as this was a staffing and personnel matter, he would ask the Deputy Mayor to respond as the relevant Cabinet portfolio holder.

Councillor B Pickard replied as follows:

I'm sure nobody wishes to see children losing any of their education. However, we have to look at what has brought this strike about and despite the draconian legislation on trade unions in this country there was a ballot undertaken by the trade unions which authorised taking industrial action. It takes two sides to get to a stage where industrial action actually has to be taken and I'm sure it's regretted by all the unions that this has had to happen as a last resort.

However, it's not just about pay, pensions and workload. It's about things like ensuring every classroom has a qualified teacher. There are Councils up and down the country where they need new schools and they can't open them, yet private individuals can come along and open a school.

We have to make sure that the changes in the curriculum and exams are positive and it's not a kneejerk reaction to whether you learn Latin or not. It's true that there are not enough new teachers. One of the big issues is the plummeting morale amongst teachers and thousands of them are leaving the service. This will no doubt lead to some shortage in the future, then people will look to bring back unqualified teachers.

To enable our schools to work together we need to fund them properly and have the teachers who have got the morale and the support to go ahead. For instance on the funding issue it must be of concern for any school that has a large 6th form where there has been a 20% cut in funding to those popular schools.

All these things add up to a point where the unions have been trying to get into a meaningful dialogue about how to protect the best interests of the children through education and you can only do that by a well motivated, well trained, well resourced teaching profession.

It is interesting how this question must have been put in before the reshuffle of the Cabinet. The teaching profession has been recognised by David Cameron, that's why he sacked Michael Gove – that is the primary reason it was done.

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

Can the Elected Mayor tell us what is the expenditure on agency social workers in this financial year compared with 2013-14 and 2012-13?

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

Members will recall in the budget last year there were a couple of items, one of which was carried forward, the review of the ISLs and there was also a piece of work to be done where we looked at continuing health care and did intensive work on reviews in order to bring more income into the Council. We didn't make any social workers redundant in the last year, but it did mean there was extra work and a lot of pressure that left us with a decision that in order to get those benefits and invest to save we needed to use some agency staff. It is regrettable, but it was important to bring that extra money in.

In the previous year, we spent £4,725 and in 2013/14 there was a considerable increase to £93,158. I would like to emphasise that on the review of the continuing health care alone we've brought in an additional £500,000 of income into the Council last year, so in fact we made more than £400,000 of benefits to the Council through the expenditure of that £93,158.

So, we don't like to use agency staff unless we have to, but where we see something that will have an ongoing year on year benefit to the Council in these circumstances, we felt it was the right thing to do.

Councillor Miller asked the following supplementary question:

Can the Cabinet Member give an assurance that the £93,158 will reduce in the next budget?

Councillor Spillard replied as follows:

Unfortunately, there has been new legislation and also a recent High Court judgement regarding the Deprivation of Liberty which means I am unable to give a guarantee at this time. We are attempting to recruit more temporary social workers because that would be cheaper.

It means that large numbers of people who are in residential homes, long term hospital patients and people who are living in independent supported living are going to have to have a Deprivation of Liberty assessment. It is the responsibility of Councils to carry that out and bear the cost and so far this year we are talking about a 300% increase. That means we're having to move our assessors across to do that work and then we need to backfill the positions that are left empty. Part of the High Court judgement said this work had to be carried out within a certain timescale of us being advised by care homes, hospitals, etc that they have people who need to have an assessment, so I can't guarantee that we won't have to spend some money and it wouldn't be the right thing to do to say how much it will be.

We are getting on with the temporary recruitment. We are not allowing anyone to go because we know we need the people we've got and we will do the best we can to minimise it, but that on top of the extra work with the ISLs and the Care Act assessments mean it's going to be a very heavy workload.

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

Councils across England have been allocated £168 million of government funding from a dedicated Pothole Repair Fund. As a condition of receiving this money, local authorities are required to publish monthly progress updates on how many potholes have been repaired. Can the Elected Mayor confirm how much North Tyneside will receive from this fund and also what steps she is taking to end the cycle of patching up roads, which is more expensive than longer term preventative work?

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

I am pleased to confirm that we have received £324,295 out of the £168 million that the Government has brought forward for pot holes and repairs. This adds to the £3 million we already have – the £1 million we have from the Local Transport Plan, the £1 million we have in the Capital Plan and the extra £1 million that the Mayor put in her budget to ensure we have over £3 million going into the repair and maintenance of roads.

Any money is certainly acceptable. We're not going to take out a policy of just filling up the pot holes, but we will undertake more permanent structural repairs in line with what you are suggesting and in line with our Highways Asset Management Plan and Network Recovery Plan.

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

Changes to small business rate relief came into effect on 1 April 2012. The government introduced this measure to ensure that businesses automatically got the relief they were entitled to. Under this system the onus is on councils to be creative and not needlessly make small businesses go through an application process when it is obvious they are eligible. The money was allocated by the Treasury so that it does not cost councils extra to grant relief to more eligible small businesses. Can the Elected Mayor confirm how many local small businesses received the business rate relief they were entitled to since the measure came into force?

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

Prior to 1 April 2012 there were 1,696 businesses in North Tyneside in receipt of Small Business Rate Relief. As of today there are now 1,872, an increase of 176.

Since the Small Business Rate Relief Scheme was introduced in April 2005 there have been several changes to the scheme. North Tyneside Council has always taken a proactive approach to targeting any potential qualifying businesses to ensure they receive the maximum support to which they are entitled.

This reduces the amount of business rates the business has to pay and optimises collection of the balance.

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

At a recent joint PCC and Chief Constable public event, questions were raised from concerned residents annoyed at the increasing domination of our pavements by rude cyclists who seem to assume they are entitled to force pedestrians out of the way. It is increasingly likely that cycling will continue to become ever more popular. What is the

Elected Mayor going to do to uphold and enforce the rights of pedestrians to unimpeded use of pavements?

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

Cycling on the pavement is an offence under Section 72 of the Highways Act 1980 and consequently it is the Police who are responsible for enforcing this. So if we have cyclists who are acting illegally I can only say it's a matter for the police.

Councillor McLaughlin asked the following supplementary question:

The two most common suggestions I receive are that cyclists are encouraged to ride slowly and give way to pedestrians; and where the pavement is narrow cyclists should be encouraged to get off and push their bike. I wonder whether the Cabinet Member thought signage to that effect would be useful?

Councillor Lott replied as follows:

It is only where there is sufficient space to allow shared usage that we should have a cycle lane and a pedestrian area. Narrow pavements should not be used for both means of transport.

The Council provides a range of cycling training opportunities for residents in the Borough to provide an understanding of how to cycle safely and respect other road users and pedestrians. Any new highway designs incorporate facilities for both cyclists and pedestrians and they are designed to ensure no conflict between the two.

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

Council, at its budget setting meeting in February, discussed proposals for reduction of staff in the Law and Governance department. A post in Member Services was identified for deletion as part of possible cost-cutting measures, with a final decision deferred till September. Can the Elected Mayor confirm that a fair and transparent job evaluation and job analysis process was carried out by trained professionals to arrive at the conclusion that this was the most dispensable post in that department?

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

Heads of Service are responsible for determining appropriate staffing structures and arrangements for their service areas. All proposals relating to restructures and redundancies follow Council processes in relation to agreed policy. All job evaluations are carried out by trained professionals within Human Resources.

In the case of the post in Members Services the usual Council procedures were followed and job evaluation carried out in accordance with the agreed procedure.

Councillor McLaughlin asked the following supplementary question:

Members value the Members Services team, without whom we would not be able to do our jobs or serve our constituents, therefore can the decision maker bear in mind the cross-party Members Support Group's opposition to any reduction in Members Services, and remember that Law and Governance is a huge department with between 80-90 staff,

which suggests to me there is plenty of alternative scope for staff reductions? I would ask that this is referred back to full Council before any final decision is taken.

Councillor Pickard replied as follows:

As I said, Heads of Service are responsible for carrying out any restructure or changes following Council policy. The reduction of staffing in Law and Governance was set at the Council's budget meeting. There were no proposals or amendments to that budget reduction therefore it is in order that this goes to the relevant Head of Service. There were other reductions in the Law and Governance area including restructuring to merge other jobs that may be at risk in Governor Services. The matter was agreed at the budget Council meeting, therefore it is not appropriate at this time to discuss individual cases in full Council. Ongoing efficiencies in operation in those departments is quite rightly the function of the Heads of Service.