

## Local Government Act 1972

### Borough of North Tyneside

25 September 2014

At the meeting of the Council of the Borough of North Tyneside duly convened and held on Thursday 25 September 2014 at 6.00 pm 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 M J Huscroft
Councillor A Arkle	Councillor N J Huscroft
Councillor Mrs A Austin	Councillor C Johnson
Councillor G Bell	Councillor D W Lilly
Councillor L Bell	Councillor M Madden
Councillor B Burdis	Councillor P Mason
Councillor C Burdis	Councillor D McGarr
Councillor W Caithness	Councillor P McIntyre
Councillor J Cassidy	Councillor J McLaughlin
Councillor K A Conroy	Councillor A McMullen
Councillor D E Corkey	Councillor L J Miller
Councillor S L Cox	Councillor Mrs S E Mortimer
Councillor EN Darke	Councillor D Ord
Councillor L Darke	Councillor K Osborne
Councillor S Day	Councillor J O'Shea
Councillor P Earley	Councillor C B Pickard
Councillor R Glindon	Councillor M Rankin
Councillor S Graham	Councillor M Reynolds
Councillor I Grayson	Councillor D Sarin
Councillor M A Green	Councillor L A Spillard
Councillor M Hall	Councillor J Stirling
Councillor J L L Harrison	Councillor A Waggott-Fairley
Councillor E Hodson	Councillor J I Walker
Councillor John Hunter	Councillor Mrs J A Wallace
Councillor M Huscroft	Councillor G C Westwater

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

### **C32/09/14 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K Barrie, C Davis, Janet Hunter, F Lott, W Lott, G Madden, P Oliver and J Pickard.

### **C33/09/14 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest reported.

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

### **C34/09/14 Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 24 July 2014, be taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chair.

### **C35/09/14 Motions**

No Motions were received for consideration at this meeting.

### **C36/09/14 2013/14 Annual Financial Report**

The Council was requested to approve the 2013/14 Audited Annual Financial Report in accordance with Section 8 (3) of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011; and the draft Letter of Management Representation.

The audit of the 2013/14 accounts had recently been concluded and an unqualified audit opinion was expected to be issued. The Audit Completion Report, produced by Mazars, in respect of the 2013/14 Annual Financial Report had been presented to the Audit Committee on 24 September 2014. No material errors had been identified in the financial statements. A small number of non material errors identified during the audit had been corrected and were reflected in the Annual Financial Report. A copy of the Audit Completion Report was attached as Appendix B.

The audited 2013/14 Annual Financial Report was attached for consideration and approval as Appendix A to the report. The Statement followed a statutory format as set out in the CIPFA Code and CIPFA Service Reporting Code of Practice.

Councillor R Glindon welcomed Mr Gareth Davies, Mazars, to the meeting and invited him to present the Audit Completion Report.

Members were given the opportunity to ask questions of Mr Davies.

Councillor Wallace requested that it be recorded she raised concern about Members receiving the Annual Finance Report 2013/14 two days prior to the meeting, which she considered did not allow enough time for Members to read the sizeable documents. In response, the Chair of Council explained that the draft Statement of Accounts had been available on the Council's website since June 2014.

It was moved by Councillor R Glindon and seconded by Councillor J O'Shea that:

“Council:

- (a) approves the Audit Completion Report, submitted by the Authority's external auditors Mazars, and agrees the draft Letter of Management Representation; and
- (b) approves the 2013/14 Audited Annual Financial Report.”

The Motion, on being put to the meeting, was approved by 38 votes to 0 votes.

### **C37/09/14 Children and Young People's Plan 2014 - 2018**

The Council was requested to approve the North Tyneside Children and Young People's Plan 2014-18 to be adopted by the Authority. The Plan was attached for consideration and approval as appended to the report. The Plan provided the overall strategic framework for further integrating the planning and delivery of children's services to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.

The North Tyneside Children and Young People's Plan formed part of the Authority's Policy Framework and was therefore required to be approved by full Council. The Plan had been prepared in accordance with the framework, which set out the process for preparing, considering and approving key plans and strategies.

The Plan had been developed by the Children, Young People and Learning Partnership, in conjunction with the Authority, as the lead partner. The partnership brought together public, voluntary and community sector providers of children's services, to improve the lives of the borough's children and young people and their families through integrated working.

In February 2014, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had approved the partnership's proposals for developing a new plan. The Committee sought further clarification on arrangements for consulting with the wider community. A consultation programme had been developed that set out arrangements for consulting with key partners including schools, the North Tyneside Safeguarding Children Board, health partners, the Youth Council and the Young Mayor. The partnership had also agreed to hold an event through which the wider community could comment on the plan.

In July 2014, the Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee and the Children, Education and Skills Sub Committee had considered the draft Children and Young People's Plan 2014-18. The Sub-Committee had sought and received assurances that, as a high level strategic framework, the Plan would not constrain the Authority's Education Review or Creating a Brighter Future programme. A set of performance measures had been included in the Plan following feedback from the committees and it had been agreed that progress against the Plan would be reported to the Children, Education and Skills Sub-Committee bi-annually from June 2015.

The priority themes and outcomes for the 2014-18 Plan were:

#### **Priority 1. Ready for School**

Outcome 1.1 A Healthy Early Childhood

Outcome 1.2 Children are Ready to Start School

**Priority 2. Ready for Work and Life**

Outcome 2.1 Narrow the gap in educational outcomes

Outcome 2.2 Ready for Employment

Outcome 2.3 Reduce Risk Taking Behaviour

**Priority 3. Safe, Supported and Cared For**

Outcome 3.1 The most vulnerable children and young people are cared for

Outcome 3.2 Improved outcomes for looked after children

Outcome 3.3 The right support for children and young people with disabilities and additional needs.

The Plan's priorities were aligned with the 'Our North Tyneside Plan', the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Safer North Tyneside Plan.

A Member referred to a recent press article which reported that half of children in the country were not ready for school by the age of 5 and she asked what percentage of children in North Tyneside were deemed not to be ready for school. The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning undertook to provide a written reply.

It was moved by Councillor I Grayson and seconded by Councillor M Madden that:

"Council approves and adopts the proposed Children and Young People's Plan 2014 – 2018 as appended to the report."

The Motion, on being put to the meeting, was unanimously approved.

**C38/09/14 Constitution and Contract Standing Orders – Proposed Changes**

The Council was requested to approve proposed changes to the Authority's Contract Standing Orders following a review of thresholds undertaken by the Constitution Task Group and also some changes to the main Constitution document to reflect new legislation relating the public's right to record public meetings of the Authority.

The Task Group had considered ways in which it might be possible to gain greater value for money when procuring low value goods and services. This area was also being considered separately as part of a wider Commercial Capacity, Commissioning and Procurement workstream under the Creating a Brighter Future Change Programme.

The Task Group considered that the current thresholds for procuring low value goods and services could be amended to promote greater competition and therefore potentially secure better prices. The proposed changes to Contract Standing Orders were attached at Appendix A. In summary, the changes were as follows:

<b>Threshold Banding</b>	<b>Current Requirements (Contract Standing Orders)</b>	<b>Changes Proposed by Constitution Task Group</b>
Procurements between £5,000 and £10,000	1 quotation	3 quotations to be invited, 1 obtained
Procurements between £10,000 and £20,000	5 quotations to be invited, 3 obtained	3 quotations to be invited, 1 obtained

The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 had come into force on 6 August 2014. This required local authorities to allow members of the public to film, photograph, audio record or report via social media the proceedings of meetings of the Cabinet, the Council and its Committees and Sub-Committees, except in circumstances where the law required or allowed the meeting to be closed to the public. Members of the public would be able to provide written commentary during a meeting, as well as oral commentary outside or after the meeting.

It was recommended that changes to the Constitution were made to reflect the requirements of the new Regulations. The proposed changes to the Constitution were attached at Appendix B. In summary the changes were as follows:

- A minor change to Article 3 – Citizens and the Authority
- Some changes to Part 4.11 – Public Access to Information Rules of Procedure
- A new protocol for members of the public wishing to report on public meetings of North Tyneside Council under Part 8 – Codes and Protocols

It was moved by Councillor J Allan and seconded by Councillor B Pickard that:

“Council approves the proposed changes to Contract Standing Orders and the Constitution set out in Appendices A and B respectively to the report and refers the approved changes to the Elected Mayor for her consent in accordance with Article 15 of the Constitution.”

The Motion, on being put to the meeting, was unanimously approved.

#### **C39/09/14 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.

#### **C40/09/14 Chair’s Announcements**

No announcements were reported on this occasion.

#### **C41/09/14 Mayor’s Announcements**

No announcements were reported on this occasion.

#### **C42/09/14 Questions by Members of the Council**

##### **1. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor S Day**

Can the Elected Mayor confirm, that following the reintroduction of street theatre and the Jazz tent at this year’s Mouth of the Tyne Festival, that this will continue at future Mouth of Tyne Events?

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

The tremendous success of the festival is something that we should all be proud of. The reintroduction by the Elected Mayor of the street entertainment and parade have been a resounding success. In fact, the Elected Mayor has received numerous letters from residents and businesses alike, thanking her for taking the decision to reinstate the street entertainment programme, also thanking her for the overall success of the event.

The positive feedback we have received has been overwhelming following the reintroduction of the street entertainment programme along with the jazz stage to the Mouth of the Tyne Festival. I'm sure that the enhanced atmosphere the street entertainment brought to the festival contributed massively to the overall success of this year's event and allowed around 90,000 people to have a great time.

Planning for the 2015 festival is already underway and we intend to keep the street theatre and jazz in next year's festival.

Councillor Day asked the following Supplementary Question:

How did you obtain this feedback?

Councillor Darke replied as follows:

A survey of visitors and businesses was conducted by NWA Research which suggests that spend contributing to local businesses in North Tyneside reached approximately £700,000 over the weekend.

## **2. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor J Pickard**

Can the Elected Mayor inform the Council what extra events she plans for the run up to Christmas?

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

I'm delighted to inform Council that a new and improved North Tyneside Winter Festival Programme is being launched at the Borough's fireworks display on The Links in Whitley Bay on 2 November.

The Festival Programme will feature popular festive events such as the North Shields Victorian Christmas Market, St. Nicholas Festival and Christmas Light switch-on, but this year we have enhanced the programme with a range of new activities.

These new activities include:

- Christmas film screenings at Council venues in Shiremoor, Longbenton, Dudley, Wallsend and Killingworth
- Buskers performing Christmas favourites in our town centres
- A new Christmas Market will be introduced in Wallsend
- We are also introducing a programme of additional seasonal activities in Longbenton, Dudley and Killingworth.

The Elected Mayor and Cabinet believe it is extremely important to support our local economy and support North Tyneside Businesses. This enhanced programme of events will hopefully encourage more visitors; provide more activities for local residents; increase footfall in local businesses; and provide a welcome boost to the local economy.

The Cabinet is also looking at the additional support that can be offered to town centres in the run up to Christmas.

### **3. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor S Day**

Can the Elected Mayor confirm that she intends to scrap the ease Extra Library Premier Membership Scheme?

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

Despite our opposition, this scheme was introduced by the previous administration with the intention of collecting additional income by charging for a range of library services including use of the people's network computers.

As we predicted at the time this had a negative impact on those on low pay or seeking work who needed to use the computers.

It is now clear that the scheme was ill thought out and an introduced charge of £30 for our residents for the use of our library service has not worked. In fact, although the estimated income target for this Premier Membership Scheme was £30,000 the actual income achieved is only £5,000.

Because of the failure of the scheme I can confirm that the scheme is currently under review and will be either abolished or radically amended.

### **4. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor J O'Shea**

Does the Elected Mayor welcome, as do the Monkseaton South and Whitley Bay Councillors, the proposal contained in the Education Review that the current three tier system be retained in the Whitley Bay and Monkseaton area?

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

The Mayor and Cabinet are well aware of the popularity of the three tier system. I am disappointed that opposition members have used this issue as a political football and have caused unnecessary concern to our parents, children and young people and teachers in North Tyneside.

I can confirm that the Elected Mayor supports this proposal. As you know we have engaged with headteachers to agree an overall approach to the review. This has been welcomed by the headteachers who very much appreciated the level of informal consultation that has been undertaken and the chances they have been given to contribute to shaping the strategic direction of the borough.

The governors and headteachers in Monkseaton and Whitley Bay are proactively supporting the local authority. They are working together as a team of leaders to look at how as a group of schools they will collaborate further to maximise opportunities and

address the challenges the review has detailed in the recent Cabinet report. Meetings are being held with heads and governors both individually and in groups.

The important thing now is to ensure that nothing jeopardises the partnership working which is enabling the work to run smoothly.

## **5. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor D Ord**

How many children have been permanently moved between schools in the borough under the Managed Move and Fair Access protocols?

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

Can I just give a brief explanation of the phrases to assist Members. A Headteacher who feels a pupil is at risk of permanent exclusion would trigger the Managed Move process. The arrangements can apply to both Primary and Secondary pupils.

The scheme works by negotiating with the pupil, parent/carer, and school a transfer of the pupil into a new school. The pupil remains on roll of the original school, but has a fresh start and attends the new school for up to a six week period as a "guest pupil". If the transfer works well the pupil would then go onto the roll of the new school. If the pupil causes problems in the new school he/she would immediately return to the original school.

The Managed Move process is overseen and facilitated by officers from within the Education Placement and Welfare Service in partnership with Headteacher colleagues.

In 2011-12 there were 33 managed moves; in 2012-13 there were 31; and in 2013-14 there were 35.

The purpose of Fair Access Protocols is to ensure that, outside of the normal admissions round, unplaced children, especially the most vulnerable, are found and offered a school place quickly. This is to ensure that the amount of time any child is out of school is kept to a minimum. Every local authority is required to have in place a Fair Access Protocol, developed in partnership with local schools, including Academy Schools. The Protocol is aligned to the DfE Fair Access Protocols: Principles and Process – Departmental advice November 2012.

The Fair Access Protocol is overseen and facilitated by officers from within the Education Placement and Welfare Service in partnership with Headteacher colleagues. The decision surrounding a Fair Access referral is made through the Fair Access Placement Panel consisting of Headteacher representatives. The Protocol applies to both Primary and Secondary pupils.

In 2011-12 there were 24 fair access referrals; in 2012-13 there were 18; and in 2013-14 there were 22.

Councillor Ord asked the following Supplementary Question:

There seems to be an average of 33 children who have moved on under a managed move. How many of those children are permanently moved, and how many have moved back, because this seems to be a clear way of avoiding scrutiny by the school governors of what the Heads are up to?

Councillor Grayson replied as follows:

Any Headteachers would have to report on any changes in the numbers of children in school. I don't have those figures but I'm happy to speak to senior officers and get a breakdown for you.

## **6. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor D Ord**

Can the Mayor confirm that it is Council Policy not to remove any healthy trees irrespective of the health and safety risk implications of the height and density of any tree populated area?

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

This is the second time I have responded to a question on our policy on trees and tree management. We do have a policy that was put in place in 2010 and it meets the requirements of what is expected of us in terms of managing our trees within North Tyneside. Whether we remove or prune is based on some outcomes, whether there is a health and safety implication we would carry out a risk assessment. We will resist the removal of authority owned trees unless it is absolutely necessary.

Obviously each case is judged on its own merits including health and safety considerations. Removal happens where there is very clear justification.

I can refer you to the specific parts of that policy.

Pruning may be carried out where the tree is causing a legally actionable nuisance to an adjoining property; an Authority owned tree which, in the opinion of the Authority, presents a threat to the public or property where pruning would alleviate this threat and to restrict tree size as an aid to the management of soil.

The actual removal of a tree is dealt with in our policy and may be done where there is a dead, dying or dangerous tree; a tree causing a legally actionable nuisance; a tree which is proven to be causing soil shrinkage or structural damage to a building; a tree where pruning has been attempted in the past to solve recognised problems without success; the thinning of young and developing trees; removing a tree to improve a wildlife habitat; or removing a tree to allow authorised development.

It's not just a simple case of pruning or removing trees; there has to be a clear assessment made of the impact of either pruning or removing a tree.

Councillor Ord asked the following Supplementary Question:

What is the process for examining these assessments, because I know a couple of people who are convinced that they were told the policy is that we don't chop down healthy trees?

Councillor Harrison replied as follows:

Yes, an assessment is done and I think you have every right to see that if you want. If there is a difficulty with that, come back to me.

Trees are important to us as they add to the beauty of North Tyneside; they filter the pollution and produce oxygen in our environment and given the rains we've had lately they are important for the water table, so it is important we get this right.

I think we also need to look at the policy and review it at some stage. We will be talking about shaping North Tyneside under our local plan and I think we need to understand the types of trees in North Tyneside, the types of development we'll have in North Tyneside and what other trees we could potentially plant in the Borough.

## **7. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor E Hodson**

Recently it has been reported that some schools in Birmingham have been persuaded to educate children in Islamic rather than the British culture and some schools have been closed as a result.

Can the Elected Mayor assure the British people of North Tyneside that none of the Borough's schools are seeking to educate children other than within the British culture buttressed by democracy, the English language and English law?

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

As part of the National Curriculum, children study a range of different faiths to develop an understanding of the diverse and multi-cultural society in which they live. This enables them also to appreciate the principles and teaching that each faith is based on.

It is very important that children are protected from extremist views, either religious or political, and schools work closely with the Prevent agenda to ensure that is the case.

The independent report into the schools situation in Birmingham revealed that the problems were evident in the Park View Educational Trust, who were responsible for running three Academies in the city. The report identifies that there was a culture of individuals and associated governors and staff promoting specific beliefs and not demonstrating their responsibility to the government's Equality Duty.

In North Tyneside, SACRE, the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education, provides written statutory guidance to all schools in the Authority in respect of the curriculum for Religious Education for pupils in all community schools in the borough. No school has applied to opt out of those arrangements, so all community schools work on the basis that all schools are mainly of a broadly Christian character.

The revised Religious Education syllabus, which is on the agenda for Cabinet in October, and has recently been through the SACRE consultation process, incorporates opportunities to discuss radicalisation and extremism within the Religious Education curriculum. Learning about these issues helps pupils to understand and explore British culture and values, as the government have recently promoted within the Ofsted framework.

In addition, the Early Years and School Improvement Service provides support in areas of the curriculum that would address these matters in schools in the borough. In addition to Religious Education, we support emotional development in PSHE, support for an English heritage project in history where pupils learn about their local culture, in geography with pupils involved in their local culture through physical aspects of the subject, in PE where

pupils learn about fair play, teamwork and leadership and the promotion of British values and democracy through Citizenship education. I would like to compliment the Chair for his presentation to a recent Headteacher briefing encouraging schools to engage in democracy in the Council. All guidance, advice and support offered for schools are designed and undertaken within the context of both OFSTED and the National Curriculum frameworks, which are Government guidelines for schools and therefore within the culture, democracy, language, values and laws of the United Kingdom.

North Tyneside Council has been praised by Northumbria Police as offering the best practice in promoting the Preventing Violent Extremism agenda within schools. Pastoral staff in schools have received training in these issues and are able to seek confidential guidance where there are concerns about individual pupils.

Also, North Tyneside Council works with and supports with funding Show Racism the Red Card. For older students, their work on racism and Islamophobia enables schools to discuss these controversial issues in a safe environment with pupils.

Councillor Hodson asked the following Supplementary Question:

Earlier this year, off-duty soldier Lee Rigby was decapitated in a busy street in the centre of London. According to the perpetrator, this action was justified in the teaching of Islam and its culture. No-one in this Chamber will support this barbarism or the indoctrination that led to it.

Will the Mayor undertake to ensure no Islamic indoctrination takes place in any of North Tyneside's schools and will she ensure that all necessary checks are undertaken to ensure that this remains so?

Councillor Grayson replied as follows:

Every Member of this Council shares the concern regarding the execution of Corporal Lee Rigby and I think I said in my answer that we are assured there isn't the opportunity or any school interested in exploring the promotion of Islamic extremism and if there was anything highlighted, that would obviously be dealt with.

#### **8. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor E Hodson**

It has been reported that 80% of tanning studios in North Tyneside are exposing clients to greater than the safe level of cancer-causing ultra violet radiation.

What action is the Elected Mayor taking to remedy this situation, expeditiously?

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

This question gives us an opportunity to raise a couple of important issues and identifies the valuable work our Trading Standards and Environmental Health teams do in North Tyneside. In February/March this year, the teams went out and found 21 out of 26 establishments had sunbeds that did not meet the required safety levels and a total of 33 out of 50 sunbeds tested were emitting rays higher than the European safety limits. These pose an increased health risk when used over a prolonged period. In some cases the UV emissions were almost four times the allowed level.

The Council then instructed the 21 premises to replace their sunbed tubes with those of a lower strength, and we will be following this up with further checks to ensure they have carried this out.

A piece of work was done and reported by Dundee University at the World Congress for Cancer of the Skin held in Edinburgh between 3-6 September this year. They raised the issue of melanoma and burning which leads to cancer. They were suggesting that the prolonged use of sunbeds had a greater effect on other cancers, specifically squamous cell carcinoma which accounts for 20% of cancer using sunbeds, whereas melanoma only accounts for 1% of skin cancers.

I have spoken to various officers and we are looking at ways of working with other Authorities to make sure people are made aware of the risks of using sunbeds. At the same time I think our Director of Public Health will be interested in this report. It is quite frightening that for people who are using sunbeds for 12 minutes every 8 days over a number of years, their likelihood of getting cancer increases by 180%.

The Chair informed Members that a single response would be given to questions 9 and 10 below:

**9. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor J Wallace**

What plans are there to replace promptly the attraction of the Board Walk café?

**10. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor D Lilly**

Can the Elected Mayor tell me why there was no consultation about the closure of the Board Walk café?

The Elected Mayor replied as follows:

After years of neglect and inaction, we are determined to regenerate the seafront area in Whitley Bay. This is in response to the clear message the residents of Whitley Bay and the borough have given that they want to see regeneration of their Coast. We have set out our intention to bring forward ambitious plans for the next stage of development at Whitley Bay seafront, which include improvements to the Northern Promenade area, linking it to the new Plaza and Spanish City whilst improving visibility and access for visitors. These improvements necessitate removing the Boardwalk Café to allow the entrance to the Northern Promenade to be significantly widened.

Unfortunately, it has been demonstrated that a café in this particular area isn't commercially viable. The two previous tenants at this location have failed to maintain their businesses successfully and gone into liquidation, and consequently leaving the Council with a great deal of unpaid rent.

I'm going to take this opportunity to make it clear sometimes we read things in our local newspapers that aren't true when there are avenues for people to find out the truth. So to read the papers asking what on earth is the Council doing is very upsetting.

Historically, the cafés on this site in the past have been single storey buildings but this poorly designed 1970s building added a second storey and then an unsympathetic single storey extension, which spoils the magnificent views along the coast and restricts access

to the Northern Promenade, which has the potential to be a significant leisure resource for residents and visitors on Whitley Bay seafront. We have taken these facts into account when making our decision about the future of the building.

Our decision is based on our desire to deliver the essential improvements residents and visitors to Whitley Bay deserve. After all, the people of Whitley Bay have been waiting for this to happen for years. We will be providing a new kiosk to provide beach refreshments and the nearby Rendezvous Café, Links Art Gallery Cafe and the 'Rainbow Corner' businesses will continue to provide sit-in facilities for visitors. A draft master plan for the proposed improvements to the seafront is currently being prepared that will be shared with the community later this year. However, I'm sad to say the demolition of the Boardwalk is considered an essential part of delivering the improvements to make it a better place for us all.

When the work is complete, Whitley Bay will have a seafront to be proud of. As well as the stunning coastline and views it will have exceptional facilities that will attract more business, more investment and more visitors to North Tyneside.

Councillor Wallace asked the following Supplementary Question:

As the Mayor says, the draft plan has not yet been published, let alone any new developments constructed. There is thus no alternative location for a café at present. Would it not therefore have been better to leave the café in place until the new structures were there?

The Elected Mayor replied as follows:

I have already said that the business has gone into liquidation and owes this Council thousands of pounds. It has not been a successful business, and there are other cafes nearby.

The Chair did not accept a supplementary question asked by Councillor D Lilly regarding the concerns of residents of The Broadway, Tynemouth about a proposed cycleway along The Broadway, as it did not arise directly out of the original question or the reply.

#### **11. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor D Lilly:**

In the light of the appalling revelations in Rotherham and the ongoing local investigation into child abuse, what reassurance can the Elected Mayor give the residents of North Tyneside, a Local Authority without a designated Head of Safeguarding, that their young people are, and will continue to be, properly looked after?

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

The Council has a designated Director of Children's Services who reports on a regular basis to the Chief Executive. As lead Member, I have weekly briefings with senior safeguarding staff, and any areas of concern are highlighted to me. They will also contact me if any issues arise during the week. I recently visited the Children's Front Door team where all the first enquiries of children and any concerns are reported, and I can report that they are a highly trained and experienced team. However, it must be remembered that safeguarding our most vulnerable children is the business of all of the Council and not just individual officers.

I can assure Members that long before Professor Jay published her report the team has been aware of the risks of Children Sexual Exploitation and worked closely with Northumbria Police on the matter.

Following the publication of the Jay report which gave details of the independent enquiry conducted by Alexis Jay on behalf of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council in October 2013 a briefing note was issued on 5 September by the Head of Children, Young People and Learning to all Elected Members, senior officers of the Council and key partners.

You may recall that the note explained that we are as confident as we can be that the failures in the system as highlighted within Rotherham are not apparent within North Tyneside. The briefing note also gave details of arrangements in place in North Tyneside which reduce the risk of a similar set of events occurring here and actions we are going to take as a result of the findings by Professor Jay.

## **12. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor D Lilly:**

Can the Elected Mayor confirm that all staff previously placed at Marden Bridge Sports Centre are still employed by the Local Authority and can she indicate where they are deployed?

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

You will recall that the original proposal to close the sports centre was a decision by the previous administration in their budget proposals. In response to this and residents' concerns about the proposed closure the Mayor and Cabinet said that they would work hard to find a solution which allowed the sports centre to continue to operate with the help of the Headteacher and governors.

I am pleased to announce that we have reached agreement with Marden Bridge Middle School that allows the sports centre to continue to run. In fact, the Headteacher John Newport was recently quoted in the News Guardian as saying "We have worked hard to produce a business plan which will allow community activities to flourish and keep a much loved facility open to the public. We are currently working to forge partnerships with local sporting clubs to make Marden Bridge a hub for sporting opportunity. What is also pleasing this summer is that the Council has invested £20,000 for the outdoor synthetic pitch to be regenerated. This type of investment will ensure the longevity of our facilities for the public to enjoy."

There were six members of staff employed at Marden Bridge Sports Centre when the school took over the running of the Sports Centre. Five of the members of staff are still working for North Tyneside Council and one has chosen to leave in line with Council policies.

It would not be appropriate for me to raise in public the choices accepted by these individuals but I can confirm that the others are still working for the Local Authority.

Councillor Lilly asked the following Supplementary Question:

If five of those people are still employed by the Authority, how can this be claimed as a saving as announced in the budget?

Councillor Grayson replied as follows:

I would have to get the exact detail – I was answering from the school point of view. My understanding is that some of the responsibilities have been taken over by the school.

Councillor C B Pickard, Deputy Mayor, replied as the Cabinet Member for Human Resources as follows:

They were moved into vacancies as part of the Council's redeployment process. We said to the unions at the time that we wouldn't fill vacancies while we were redeploying people around the Council.

**13. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor J Wallace:**

The Government has provided over a third of a million pounds for pothole repairs to North Tyneside.

Can the Elected Mayor tell me what criteria have been used to distribute this money equitably amongst all wards in the Borough?

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

The additional funding has been used to extend the Council's road resurfacing programme and is therefore being spent on larger planned schemes that give a lasting improvement to the highway network rather than localised pothole repairs. This provides best value and is in line with national best practice and our Highway Asset Management Plan.

Whilst our programme of resurfacing work is based largely on those streets that are in greatest need, we always look to evenly distribute the work around the whole of the Borough so all wards benefit from some improvement work.

Councillor Wallace asked the following Supplementary Question:

I understand it's a condition of this additional money that monthly reports have to be produced indicating how that money has been spent, how many pot holes have been filled, and so on. Can the Cabinet Member update us on the monthly figures and can the monthly report be sent to Members?

Councillor Harrison replied as follows:

We certainly can update Members on those monthly figures. We can make them available and we do report on them as required.

**14. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor J Wallace:**

If there is a 'Yes' vote in the Scottish referendum what plans has the Elected Mayor in place to attract businesses to come to the North East since many have indicated their intention to relocate to England; if there is a 'No' vote what plans has the Mayor in place to attract businesses to move to North Tyneside since the SNP has indicated it will seek a further referendum which will cause continued uncertainty in Scotland?

The Elected Mayor replied as follows:

Firstly, I would like to congratulate Scotland on its decision to stay within the United Kingdom.

We will continue with the pro-active inward investment activity which has been so successful recently, bringing jobs and investment into North Tyneside. For example, in the last 12 months more space has been let at Cobalt than any other office park in the country. There are now over 12,000 people employed on the site with another 5,000 at Quorum Business Park.

New employers attracted to the borough include Utilitywise, Perfect Image and Helplink. Inward investors who have recently added significant growth in their workforce include Accenture, Hewlett Packard and G4S.

We will continue our work to promote North Tyneside to businesses in Scotland as we have been doing and the rest of the UK and overseas.

The Mayor referred to recent visits she had made to some local companies which had been successful in delivering contracts that they had brokered in Scotland.

Councillor Wallace asked the following Supplementary Question:

The referendum was clearly enormously important and I share the Mayor's view on the outcome. Does the Mayor support the principle that there should be English votes for English law and that the unfairness of the present system of voting in Parliament is now even more obvious following the referendum?

The Elected Mayor replied as follows:

I think there should be a hard look and review of the Constitution.

**15. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor J McLaughlin:**

We recognise that there is a balance to be struck between the need of highway users and that of businesses to promote themselves, so can the Elected Mayor confirm what the Council's policy is with regard to what appears to be the proliferation of A boards on pavements in our main towns?

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

The Council recognises the importance of balancing the needs of businesses in difficult economic times and keeping pavements safe for all users particularly the partially sighted and mobility impaired.

In cooperation with the business community an advisory policy was introduced in 2009 along with guidelines to encourage the safe installation of advertising boards (A boards). This specified a maximum size and guidelines to limit their proliferation on the streets.

The policy remains advisory; however it is monitored by the Highways Streetworks Management Team and if any business is not adhering to the policy they are contacted by the team and given advice and in some circumstances, removal of the A Board.

We are currently reviewing the current policies with regard to the siting of all street furniture on the public highway and will consider the siting of A Boards as part of this review. The policy includes distances where a board should be placed from the kerb edge and there is also a permit application form to place a board. There is a limit of one board per business.

Councillor McLaughlin asked the following Supplementary Question:

I acknowledge the right of businesses to promote themselves, but in relation to Tynemouth Front Street, I would say there are at least five breaches of those conditions – first in relation to whether there should only be one because some of the traders have two and the rule about boards not being a visual distraction is being ignored; the rule about keeping them a minimum distance from the footpath is not being maintained; the rule about siting boards in front of the building frontage is not being complied with and the rule about boards being no wider than 600mm is not being adhered to. So can the Cabinet Member tell me how this will be investigated?

Councillor Harrison replied as follows:

Thank you for bringing this to my attention. We will look at this issue, it's the first time I have been made aware of it. We need to get the balance right, but clearly moving up and down a pathway is important to people to ensure that they can do it safely. If you provide me with some details we will come back to you.

**16. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor J McLaughlin:**

EEF, the manufacturers' organisation, reported recently that three quarters of manufacturing firms were struggling to find staff with the right skills. Research commissioned by the LGA contrasts the 94,000 people trained in hair and beauty for just 18,000 new jobs in that sector in 2012, with the 123,000 people trained for around 275,000 advertised construction jobs, more than two jobs for every qualified person.

Basic skills were also a concern, weaknesses in employees' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills were reported by half of employers surveyed by the CBI in 2012, alongside high dissatisfaction with the self-management, social and customer service skills of school and college leavers.

Can the Elected Mayor explain what she is doing to tackle local growth and the skills system in order to understand the barriers that local businesses, the LEP and the Authority face in bringing employers and skills providers together and matching provision with need?

The Elected Mayor replied as follows:

I note that the figures you have quoted are national figures and relate to 2012. When I was first elected I was disappointed to find the lack of emphasis on ensuring that our children and young people and other residents had the right skills for future employment. This is why we as a Cabinet asked for the school review to be undertaken and why we will continue to work with our colleges and further education providers to ensure that we are providing the right training and skills that our businesses need.

The Council is working hard with local businesses to determine current and future skills demand to support business growth. We meet regularly and they tell us that we need to

ensure our Headteachers gain a greater understanding about the needs of employers. The team are working with national organisations including UK Trade and Industry to maximise inward investment opportunities. This includes those looking to locate onto the Enterprise Zone on the North Bank of the River Tyne and the expanding business parks including Cobalt, Quorum and Indigo park.

Linking these opportunities for growth with the Employment and Skills team and external partners ensures employers maximise the available funding and training support available. In the last 12 months we have delivered training to 4100 people; supported 3120 unemployed people towards gaining work; and supported 66 apprenticeships in external businesses in the last 5 months.

The Council has recently recruited 26 new apprentices and has plans to recruit more in the coming months.

The Council is working closely with the LEP and the Councils in the Combined Authority to access external grant funding to support employer engagement and business workforce planning. This will deliver more training in growth sectors and assist businesses to develop their current workforce and plan better when expanding.

Ensuring that our local residents and young people access the jobs created continues to be one of our priorities. There is an increased focus on direct support that mentors and helps to progress lower skilled people and those most in need of support to prepare for these opportunities. This includes financial support, access to existing and new training with route ways to continue learning and access jobs, including apprenticeships.

I would like to take this opportunity to read you an email that I have received from a local business today who noted with some interest that this question was being put to full Council this evening.

They have written to me to offer North Tyneside Council, the Cabinet and myself their wholehearted support to the initiatives undertaken to date and for the continuation of the work to 'tackle local growth and the skills system....'. They state that the support they have received to date from the Council has been fantastic as it has led to them developing a number of initiatives aimed at addressing the skills system. Furthermore with the support of the Council it has led to them creating over 50 full-time posts over the last 12 months with another 70 planned for the next 12 months, targeting the education and skills agenda.

In summary they are more than happy to be associated with the skills system initiatives.

Recently a group has been set up with members from the Tees Valley LEP, the North East LEP, Directors of Education and Children's Services and business leaders, and I have been appointed as chair of this committee, which is a North East challenge to improve education and skills training in the area.

Councillor McLaughlin asked the following Supplementary Question:

I would like to thank the Mayor for her very encouraging response. Would she like to comment on the fact that there has been an upturn in the housing construction industry, which has resulted in skills shortages for bricklayers, plumbers, etc and are these gaps being addressed through local colleges and vocational providers?

The Elected Mayor replied as follows:

Last week I visited a set up in North Tyneside which is being run by Tyne Met developing joiners, plumbers, electricians, bricklayers and plasterers and that is trying to fill the gap.