

## Local Government Act 1972

### Borough of North Tyneside

12 March 2015

At the meeting of the Council of the Borough of North Tyneside duly convened and held on Thursday 12 March 2015 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 John Hunter
Councillor A Arkle	Councillor M Huscroft
Councillor Mrs A Austin	Councillor N J Huscroft
Councillor K Barrie	Councillor C Johnson
Councillor G Bell	Councillor D Lilly
Councillor L Bell	Councillor F Lott
Councillor B Burdis	Councillor W Lott
Councillor C Burdis	Councillor G Madden
Councillor W Caithness	Councillor M Madden
Councillor J Cassidy	Councillor D McGarr
Councillor K A Conroy	Councillor P McIntyre
Councillor D Corkey	Councillor J McLaughlin
Councillor S L Cox	Councillor A McMullen
Councillor EN Darke	Councillor Mrs S E Mortimer
Councillor L Darke	Councillor D Ord
Councillor C Davis	Councillor J O'Shea
Councillor S Day	Councillor C B Pickard
Councillor P Earley	Councillor J Pickard
Councillor R Glindon	Councillor M Reynolds
Councillor S Graham	Councillor D Sarin
Councillor I Grayson	Councillor L A Spillard
Councillor M A Green	Councillor J Stirling
Councillor M Hall	Councillor A Waggott-Fairley
Councillor J L L Harrison	Councillor J I Walker
Councillor E Hodson	Councillor Mrs J A Wallace
Councillor Janet Hunter	Councillor G C Westwater

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

**C83/03/15 Former Councillor Edward Hart**

The Chair informed Council that Edward Hart, a former Councillor for North Tyneside Council and Wallsend Borough Council, had died recently. Members and officers stood in silence as a mark of respect.

**C84/03/15 Public Questions**

**1. Question to the Elected Mayor by Mr B Snedden of Forest Hall:**

Due to the severest recession what was a vibrant night time economy, the entertainment areas of North Tyneside have suffered dramatically, as there are up to 204 individual small businesses dependent on this night time economy could the Mayor give a statement on what the Council propose to do to regenerate this night time economy and how the Council propose to inform visitors and residents that North Tyneside is still open for business at night?

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

Undoubtedly the evening economy is in transition in some places in the Borough as is the case across the country. We are experiencing a programme of austerity and ordinary working people are paying for the sins of investment bankers who continue to claim multi-million pound bonuses. However, despite the challenging economic climate, the evening economy in Tynemouth and North Shields Fish Quay in particular has seen steady footfall leading to investment from businesses and a growing regional profile.

There has been a shift in the focus of evening economy businesses in Whitley Bay to concentrate more on food, entertainment and a lounge environment, capitalising on a change in leisure habits and taking the opportunity to invest in a quality product offering.

In order to encourage further investment in the area we have recently consulted on ambitious and comprehensive plans to reinvigorate the whole North Tyneside coastline, especially the Whitley Bay area. These proposals will see investment in this area of around £36m over the next 5 years - not only from the Council but also the private sector with projects such as works to improve Northern Promenade.

Our plans include the restoration of the Spanish City Dome. The proposals for the building will not only see it return to its former glory in terms of its appearance but will also provide new space for a range of family orientated businesses to operate from. This would also increase the footfall in the area.

A recent marketing exercise has resulted in over 25 expressions of interest from North East businesses to take space within the Dome. Discussions are also progressing with a well known hotel chain to develop a new hotel and restaurant at the Spanish City site. Last year the Council took the decision to purchase a number of properties that had been left in poor or derelict conditions. This provides a substantial site which will be brought forward in the coming months for new housing development. The former Avenue public house is also being demolished and again will be brought forward at an appropriate time for housing. In the meantime the site will be turned into a temporary garden by Whitley Bay Big Local, hopefully encouraging more people to the area.

I did note a comment on one of the social media sites today from a lady criticising the Council for the dereliction and demolition in Whitley Bay, and I was wondering how else derelict buildings were dealt with other than to demolish them.

This administration will do all it can to provide the right stimulus for private sector investors to boost the night time economy in North Tyneside.

## **2. Question to the Elected Mayor by Mr G Partis of West Monkseaton:**

According to the Chairman Mr. John Anderson of the Councillors' Allowances Panel the allowances of North Tyneside Council were too low to attract and retain high calibre Councillors. Does she agree with this statement, and also could she or the Cabinet Member expand on the statement "We also need to have people who are able to stand as Councillors, whatever their personal circumstances"?

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

I think it is important to note that these were the words of the Chairman of the Independent Panel and I fully agree with the comments of his Panel.

It is important that we encourage people to stand as Ward Members from diverse backgrounds to represent their communities.

Local authorities must also do more to promote democratic engagement and to popularise the idea of becoming a councillor among under-represented and hard-to-reach groups, especially young people.

The Parliamentary Communities and Local Government cross-party Committee stated that the current level of allowances paid to councillors is too low and acts as a deterrent to many people who might otherwise stand for election.

The Committee identifies three main barriers in stopping people from becoming councillors:

- Some people are put off by the time commitment involved. 'As the role becomes increasingly demanding, councils should consider providing councillors with officer support to help them, for instance to manage their casework';
- Employers do not always take a positive view of staff becoming councillors and may not give them the support or time off required. 'The Government should consider whether employers can be given specific incentives to support employees who are councillors'.
- The levels of allowances paid to councillors to cover their expenses is also identified as a deterrent to many people who might otherwise stand for election. 'Few councillors will vote themselves higher allowances even if there is a legitimate reason for doing so, because it provokes so much public controversy. Councils should be given the power to transfer decisions about allowances to independent local bodies. It would be totally inconsistent for Parliament to deny councils the option it has chosen for the determination of its own pay and conditions'.

I fully support the recommendations of the Parliamentary Committee.

### **C85/03/15 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M J Huscroft, P Mason, L Miller, P Oliver, K Osborne and M Rankin.

### **C86/03/15 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations**

There were no declarations of interest made and no dispensations in relation to registerable personal interests were reported.

### **C87/03/15 Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Council meetings held on 22 January, 5 February and 19 February 2015 be taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chair.

### **C88/03/15 Motions**

(i) Motion signed by Councillors J Harrison, C B Pickard and L Spillard:

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

‘This Council is proud of the education provision in North Tyneside and that it is one of the top performing Councils in the country.

However we are concerned at the proposals to limit spending per pupil for 5-16 year olds in cash terms only and planned cuts in early years and further education funding.

We believe this will lead to serious cuts in our 6<sup>th</sup> form and FE sector, lead to higher class sizes and seriously reduce the early years provision.

The Council requests that the Mayor and Cabinet write to the main political parties to ensure that the incoming government will maintain education spending in real terms.’

The motion, on being put to the meeting, was approved by 44 votes to 0 votes.

(ii) Motion signed by Councillors G Bell, J O’Shea and C B Pickard:

It was moved by Councillor G Bell and seconded by Councillor J O’Shea that:

‘British Nuclear Test Veterans call for recognition of the unique contribution made by our Nuclear Test Veterans to the nation and defence of the realm.

The tests took place in the 1950s and 1960s and the majority of the service personnel taking part in these tests were National Servicemen and some only young teenagers.

We should be in no doubt that their selfless contribution helped to equip the UK with the deterrent that it needs.

It would be most appreciated the support from North Tyneside Council who are outstanding supporters of HM Armed Forces and Veterans, to support the recognition campaign for Nuclear Test Veterans.'

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

### **C89/03/15 Pay Policy Statement 2015/16**

The Council received a report which set out the amendments proposed to the Pay Policy Statement 2015/16 that Council had agreed at its meeting on 13 March 2014; and sought approval for the proposed pay policy as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

The following areas of the Pay Policy Statement had been amended due to legislative, policy or organisational changes:

- The Median average salary had changed from £21,067 to £21,530 per annum as a result of the pay settlements agreed in 2014/15 and some changes to the Authority's structures and rates of pay. The Authority had restructured its senior leadership team in July 2014 and had implemented nationally negotiated Pay Awards for all employees including those on Chief Officer terms and conditions of service effective from 1 January 2015. The pay multiple had reduced slightly from 6.88 to 6.73, however overall it remained the same ratio of 1:7.
- Pay Scales had been amended to reflect the pay awards which would see the deletion of spinal column point 5 from the national pay spine with effect from 1 October 2015.
- The pay line of Chief Officers' salaries had been re-aligned to reflect the posts and structure of the Senior Leadership Team which had been reviewed in July 2014.

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

'Council approves the Pay Policy Statement for 2015/16 at Appendix 1 to the report'.

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

### **C90/03/15 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.

### **C91/03/15 Chair's Announcements**

The Chair made the following announcements

- He congratulated Abbie Armstrong , who attends St Thomas More RC Academy, on being elected as the new Young Mayor.
- He also congratulated Wellfield Middle School on achieving the highest percentage of pupils voting (97%) in the Young Mayor's election.

The Chair thanked Councillors W Caithness, D E Corkey and K A Conroy, who would not be seeking re-election in May, for their services to the Council.

Councillors Caithness, Corkey and Conroy each responded appropriately.

The Chair also expressed his good wishes to those Councillors who were seeking re-election.

### **C92/03/15 Elected Mayor's Announcements**

The Elected Mayor thanked elected Member colleagues and officers for the various achievements that had been made in the last two years.

She also thanked the three Members who were standing down from the Council for their services to the Council and expressed her best wishes to them for the future.

### **C93/03/15 Questions by Members of the Council**

The Chair had agreed that a joint response be provided to Questions 1 and 2 below.

#### **1. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor D Sarin:**

Whilst I acknowledge that the Crematorium is now open and working, can the Elected Mayor tell me when the project will be completed ie. road surfaces made good; signage erected regarding parking, directions and speed limits; toilets opened and Book of Remembrance room open?

#### **2. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor C Davis:**

Can the Mayor confirm that Tynemouth Crematorium was opened on time and on budget?

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

Thank you for your questions.

I will provide a joint response to questions 1 and 2. I am pleased to say that the Crematorium reopened on 16 February on time and within budget. In fact the project was delivered £100,000 under budget.

It was always our intention to reopen Tynemouth Crematorium in the new year 2015. In relation to the improvements being carried out at Preston Cemetery, I'm pleased to report that the new Book of Remembrance Room is now open. The new room has been relocated to the building next to the main Bereavement Services Office. This means that people can now view the book without having to go into the chapel when services are taking place – which I'm sure you will agree is a much more appropriate location.

The refurbishment of the public toilets is now complete and we are awaiting connection of the new water supply by Northumbrian Water. This work is planned for completion by around 16 March, after which the newly refurbished toilets will be opened to the public. In the meantime, the public can continue to use the public toilet at the main entrance to the cemetery and the new toilet within the crematorium building itself.

New signage is also currently being installed throughout the cemetery and further road surfacing works will follow in the Spring, delivering even further improvements.

As I have previously said in this Chamber, we have substantially invested in this important service and it is because of our investment that we now have a facility that we all can be proud of. When I came to Council to request that we could go forward to carry out repairs to and renewal of the crematorium, it was aligned to mercury abatement, something that the previous administration failed to take on board. This Mayor took that opportunity and made the investment to ensure we're providing a good service, not only for the residents of North Tyneside, but also beyond that.

It means that we have also been able to reduce the waiting time for cremations in North Tyneside from 4 weeks to 1 week.

Not only did we put investment into the Crematorium, we looked to improve the rest of the facilities within the cemetery and we also took the opportunity to invest money in Whitley Bay cemetery.

I am concerned that there have been references in political newsletters to remarks made by an officer; things that are untrue and have not happened. There may have been some issues around this scheme, but we did it on time and under budget, and to write in a newsletter and spread malicious information around regarding this fantastic project I think is abhorrent, and if the Councillor who actually put it in the newsletter wishes me to look into it further please come forward and we will carry out an investigation into whom the officer was that gave him that information.

Councillor Sarin asked the following supplementary question:

Councillor Harrison brought a report to this Chamber on 23 January 2014 which said ...'to ensure the Crematorium is operational in advance of winter 2014 when demand is at its highest'. I then received a briefing dated 7 August which said works are approximately one week behind, but this is unlikely to impact on the completion date which remains end of November/early December.

As the project has obviously been a month late in its delivery, I would like to see a copy of the audit trail please.

Councillor Harrison replied as follows:

It is incorrect to say it's a month behind. When I came to this Chamber I was very clear in saying we were keen to ensure the facility was up and running on the dates that we said. It is an important facility for our communities, and it's actually become more important because I can report that unfortunately Blyth Valley's crematorium caught fire and has broken down, so we're having to take on board extra cremations and burials.

I would challenge you to come forward and tell me which officers you spoke to and told you there were problems with the building. If you do that we will look into it.

Councillor Davis asked the following supplementary question:

Is it true there was no delay and it was on budget?

Councillor Harrison replied as follows:

As I said, it was open in time and under budget by around £100,000. It is something we should be proud of. We should also be saying we are providing a facility for the whole of the Borough instead of knocking it.

**3. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor E Hodson:**

Car parking charges are levied as a means by which to regulate parking on the limited road space available for this purpose. Does the Elected Mayor think that the budgeted increased car parking charges will ease parking in the Borough or is it simply a hidden increase in tax for residents of North Tyneside?

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

The intended outcome of the review is, better managed car parking arrangements across the Borough and it is certainly not a “hidden tax” as suggested by your question.

As Members of the Council will know, the Council has a duty to manage the road network efficiently, which requires appropriate management of parking as part of that. Parking charges are only one of a number of measures which are used to regulate car parking and the road network as whole.

The budget proposals are set against a fundamental review of how we manage our car parks and permit schemes across the Borough. This review is long overdue as some of our policies relating to permits and charging have not changed in over a decade.

Councillor Hodson asked the following supplementary question:

The urgent requirement for town centres and tourism is to provide more car parking so that it is easier for people to park and shop and for tourists to park and visit. Making limited car parking more expensive will cause shoppers to shop out of town and tourists to go elsewhere. The last administration provided more car parking for these reasons and increased revenues for the Council by that greater provision. Do you agree that is the way forward? I've heard that the car park charge in Tynemouth has increased from 80p per hour to £1.20.

Councillor Lott replied as follows:

The questioner is correct about the increases in foreshore charges, and it's not a rumour – the advert was placed in the local press and on site on 2 March. Foreshore parking is largely used by people from outside of the Borough and this increased rate is unlikely to discourage people from parking along the seafront at Whitley Bay, Cullercoats and Tynemouth.

Regarding town centre car parking, we intend to continue to provide free parking in or close to town centres to encourage people to walk a short distance to take advantage of the shopping centres in North Tyneside.



**4. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor A McMullen:**

Can the Mayor confirm that when the previous Conservative administration sold off our council services that part of the agreement was that the companies involved would make a profit of £19 million so taking away scarce resources from the residents of North Tyneside?

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

Yes, it came as a shock to me when I discovered that when the previous Conservative administration sold off our Council services part of the agreement was that the companies involved would make a profit of £19 million; information which had not been disclosed to the public.

I believe that if this had been widely known at the time of the decision then this would have been questioned by Members and more importantly our residents. After all this was money which was being taken away from Council Tax payers, money that could have been better spent on providing Council services.

In addition, the previous Conservative administration failed to give the full facts to the public when they sold off these public services to the private sector.

I have to say that this was despite a motion being raised by the Labour Group on 26 July 2012 which called on the previous administration's Cabinet to delay the outsourcing process. The reason for this request was that we acknowledged that this decision would affect services for the next 10 -15 years and as such the Labour Group wanted the then Conservative Mayor Linda Arkley to allow the full Council to consider and debate a detailed analysis of the whole risks of outsourcing; also allow more time to research the potential bidders and identify any risks, and to assess whether any potential in-house options would have allowed the savings to be made.

This has only come to light following investigation by the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Bruce Pickard and myself.

We are both shocked that members of the public and Members of the Council were not kept fully aware, particularly at a time of scarce resources.

To allow these companies to make a possible £19m profit is scandalous.

**5. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor K Osborne:**

I welcome the increased investment of £150,000 in Tynemouth Swimming Pool. Can the Mayor outline what the investment will consist of and when will it be completed?

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

The investment in Tynemouth Pool will see improvement works to a number of areas including: -

- Dealing with the blocked drains that have caused problems in the gym and health spa for a number of years;

- Drainage improvements in the Contours changing rooms.
- The Contours changing rooms, health spa and Gym “refurbishment” consists of new carpets, re-plastering some walls, new vinyl flooring in the changing rooms and redecoration throughout.
- Repairs to the pool hall ceiling and new flooring in some corridors.
- Repairs to the entrance canopy, including a new flat roof.
- Some important fire safety works in some of the non public areas.

It is important to note that this investment includes £50,000 worth of brand new fitness equipment for our popular Contours gym.

The work is scheduled for completion by the middle of April.

#### **6. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor J O’Shea:**

Does the Mayor share my concern at the intervention in Councillors’ allowances of Eric Pickles particularly when his own Conservative County Council pay each Cabinet Member £46,800 in allowances?

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

It is important to place the issue of allowances in context. The Independent Remuneration Panel recommended an increase in basic allowance and no increase in special responsibility allowance.

In practice, if you look at total allowances for a Cabinet Member in North Tyneside, it is still the lowest in the seven combined north east authorities.

Eric Pickles, in his intervention, described the increase as ‘beggars belief’ and ‘lining their pockets as they pass £40m of cuts’. This is not only wrong in fact, because in our budget there are £14 million of cuts which were imposed on the Council by his own department, but they are also hypocritical.

It beggars belief that MPs will have a hike of £6,000 and that he was asked last May to investigate a massive hike of up to 60% in allowances for Surrey County Councillors, a rise above that recommended by the Independent Remuneration Panel. This led to the resignation of the whole Independent Remuneration Panel, yet I can find no response from him about this increase. Is this because it is a Conservative Council?

Following the resignation of the Panel the County Council backtracked and amended the allowances to a 33% increase for cabinet members and the introduction of additional associate cabinet members. This has resulted in total allowances for Surrey cabinet members of £34,910 and for associated cabinet members of £24,918.

It is hardly surprising that he would be silent on the record of Conservative Councils and in Conservative Essex, the council area of his constituency, the cabinet member total

allowances are a massive £46,810 and once again they have introduced the concept of deputy cabinet members, a total of 11 of them, whose total allowance amounts to £23,875.

However, this is not the total amount the tax payers are paying for councillors' allowances, as in addition to the County Council, they also pay for the town or district councillors. For example in Conservative Tunbridge Wells, where Councillor Glen Hall, the Conservative candidate for Tynemouth is a councillor, they have increased their allowances by 50% since 2009. A cabinet member in Tunbridge Wells is paid a total allowance of £16,500, but on top of this, they also have to pay for the Conservative Kent County councillors a massive £40,175 and again a further 11 deputy cabinet members paid £25,437. So, in total the council tax payers in Conservative Tunbridge Wells are paying an incredible £56,675 for the same representation that North Tyneside Council tax payers pay £12,672.

I think this exposes the hypocrisy of Eric Pickles who hides the fact that he is responsible for the council cuts and his willingness to condemn North Tyneside while remaining silent about the real fat cats lining their pockets, his Conservative pals in Essex, Sussex and Kent.

Councillor O'Shea asked the following supplementary question:

Can you confirm that only one special responsibility allowance can be paid to a councillor and has this policy been adhered to?

Councillor Pickard replied as follows:

I can confirm that the Council Constitution is clear that only one special responsibility allowance is payable to councillors.

Following the remarks made by the Conservative Group Leader, Councillor Judith Wallace and her Group about councillors' allowances I looked at the published information and it appeared that she had been paid more than her entitlement. I asked the Chief Executive to investigate and he has confirmed that two SRAs were in fact paid every month for the full year 2012-13 to Councillor Wallace.

The allowances were for Deputy Mayor and also as Leader of the Conservative Group. I find it incredible that for a full year, as the Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Finance, that a massive 50% increase in SRA was not noticed.

**7. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor S Cox:**

Can the Mayor confirm how many Council houses have been built in each of the last 5 years and how many are planned to be built next year?

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

Thank you for this question. Before I answer, I think it's important to understand the context. There were no Council houses built between 1990 and 2013. However, this Elected Mayor has clearly stated that it is her intention to deliver more quality affordable homes. This has led to the Cabinet agreeing an ambitious target to increase the pace and scale of the Affordable Homes Programme within North Tyneside through the delivery of 3,000 affordable homes over the next 10 years.

This includes new Council housing as well as delivery through the Authority's strategic and enabling role, working with the Homes and Communities Agency, Registered Providers (RPs) and developers to meet a range of housing needs including the needs of vulnerable groups. The Council is also seeking to bring empty properties back into use as affordable housing.

I'm delighted to report that in March 2013 the Council completed the conversion of St George's Square (previously a single men's homelessness unit) into 12 houses. 2013/14 saw the construction of 12 new homes in Swan Close, formally the site of the Boys Club in Wallsend. The same year also saw the conversion of 2 recreation rooms, in Balliol Avenue and Kelso Gardens, to provide new homes. This brought the total for that year up to 14 new council homes.

In 2014/15, 9 new homes were constructed in Barr Close, the site of a former sheltered scheme in Battle Hill, and we saw the completion of the first 96 new apartments under the North Tyneside Living PFI project. In addition, the Council also undertook the conversion of bedsits at Bank Top cottages into 2 new homes, the conversion of the library on the Coast Road into 2 new homes, the conversion of the recreation room at Wright Drive into 1 new home and the conversion of retail units in Avon Avenue to provide 4 further new homes. This has delivered 114 new council homes this year.

Plans for 2015/16 include the new development of 41 new council homes in Wallsend Centre on the site of the former Police Station, Alexander Street and the East Car Park. Another 9 new homes are due to be constructed on the site of the former Bude Court sheltered scheme in Battle Hill and the site at Somervyl, Longbenton, will also see new development with 7 new homes plus a bungalow and respite unit for Adult Social Care. In addition, 32 homes will be delivered on the Blandford Road site and the North Tyneside Living PFI is expected to deliver a further 105 apartments. Conversion works at Bedford Avenue and Victoria Terrace will deliver another 8 new homes. I'm pleased to announce this planned programme will provide a total of 204 new council homes.

Councillor Cox asked the following supplementary question:

I'm pleased the Mayor has set a challenging target of delivering 3,000 genuinely new affordable homes across the Borough. Can the Cabinet Member say where he is hoping to deliver these homes and how will this be achieved?

Councillor Harrison replied as follows:

The homes will be built in a variety of locations across the Borough and will seek to reflect local needs. The Local Plan will provide strategic direction for where we should be building those homes. The key to this is to ensure we have proper consultation and engagement and we are doing that in a number of ways; speaking to local Members and local people through the consultation process that we have in place.

The Mayor and Cabinet clearly stated their policy intention in the Our North Tyneside Plan that the Authority will deliver "more quality affordable homes." In the 10 years to 2013, a total of 789 new affordable homes were delivered within the Borough.

The need for affordable housing is supported by the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2014. The SHMA provides a clear evidence base on the level of housing need within the Borough, including the need for affordable housing. It has identified an annual

shortfall of 490 affordable homes. Whilst this figure is not a target it does show that there is a significant need for more affordable housing in the Borough.

**8. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor S Day:**

Can the Mayor give me an update on what is planned for the Toy Museum in Tynemouth?

The Elected Mayor replied as follows:

The proposed refurbishment of the former Toy Museum is a key project that will compliment the Council's own ongoing coastal regeneration initiatives.

At this stage, officers are in detailed discussions with a preferred developer who has plans to refurbish the former Toy Museum and turn it into a high quality public events space. This developer intends to make a substantial financial investment, upgrading the premises which may also include additional works to improve the whole of the Palace Buildings.

This would result in an excellent and unique venue that will be available to residents and visitors for special occasions such as weddings and civil partnership receptions. The developer also has plans to attract seasonal exhibitions to the venue that will be a valuable addition to the tourism offer available at the Coast.

We hope to be announcing the details of this project by the summer. This is just one of many developers and companies coming to invest in North Tyneside.