

Local Government Act 1972

Borough of North Tyneside

23 July 2015

At the meeting of the Council of the Borough of North Tyneside duly convened and held on Thursday 23 July 2015 in The Chamber at Quadrant at which a quorum of Members were present, that is to say:

Present

Councillor G Bell (In the Chair)
N Redfearn (Elected Mayor)

Councillor J M Allan	Councillor C Johnson
Councillor A Arkle	Councillor D Lilly
Councillor Mrs A Austin	Councillor G Madden
Councillor K Barrie	Councillor M Madden
Councillor L Bell	Councillor P Mason
Councillor K L Bolger	Councillor D McGarr
Councillor B Burdis	Councillor Mrs P McIntyre
Councillor J Cassidy	Councillor D McMeekan
Councillor K A Clark	Councillor A McMullen
Councillor SL Cox	Councillor L J Miller
Councillor EN Darke	Councillor Mrs S E Mortimer
Councillor L Darke	Councillor T Mulvenna
Councillor S Day	Councillor A Newman
Councillor D Drummond	Councillor P Oliver
Councillor P Earley	Councillor J O'Shea
Councillor R Glindon	Councillor N A Percy
Councillor I Grayson	Councillor C B Pickard
Councillor M A Green	Councillor M Reynolds
Councillor M Hall	Councillor L A Spillard
Councillor J L L Harrison	Councillor J Stirling
Councillor E F J Hodson	Councillor A Waggott-Fairley
Councillor Janet Hunter	Councillor J I Walker
Councillor John Hunter	Councillor Mrs J A Wallace
Councillor M Huscroft	

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

C28/07/15 Public Questions

1. Question to the Elected Mayor by Mrs Brenda Charleston of Wallsend:

Why when we are trying to encourage families and tourism in North Tyneside the public toilet facilities are never open till the stated time on the website of 9pm. I have found them closed much earlier, one as early as 4 pm. Is this the way forward to encourage families to stay and spend money in the borough?

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

“Can I thank Mrs Charlestone for this question.

Over the last few years, we have invested in this service and have provided new toilets at our Customer Service Centres, along the coast and in some parks including Whitley Bay, Wallsend and Northumberland Park. A toilet refurbishment and modernisation programme is also in place, with Preston Cemetery being the latest toilets to have benefitted from an upgrade.

The Council try hard to ensure that our public conveniences are open, accessible and clean. However, sometimes due to circumstances beyond our control, our toilet provision has to be temporarily closed for health and safety reasons, due to vandalism or misuse.

During the six week summer holiday season, we keep public toilets at our resort beaches open until 9 pm.

If Mrs Charleston would like to tell me which particular public toilets she is referring to or talk to me then I will be happy to do so.

In the meantime I will ask officers to implement a system to ensure that it is clearly signposted when the toilet facility has had to be closed early due to one of the above reasons.”

2. Question to the Elected Mayor by Mrs Linda Arkley of North Shields

Whilst the North East economy is growing, it is also missing out on billions of pounds worth of investment and the opportunity of being part of a “once in a life time” devolution deal with the Government. Can the Elected Mayor tell me what meetings, representations and discussions she has held personally with the Secretary of State Greg Clark concerning devolution and having a Regional Elected Mayor? Will she actively campaign for a Regional Mayor in order to ensure that we can bring money and long term investment to the automotive and advanced manufacturing industries, along with financial services and life sciences which are central to future employment prospects in the North East?

Mayor Redfearn replied as follows:

“A letter from all of the 6 Council Leaders from within the Combined Authority, and myself has been sent to Greg Clark MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to confirm that we wish to begin detailed devolution negotiations. The letter sets out the Combined Authority’s ambitions for a radical devolution deal which would help in developing the area as the Northern Powerhouse’s export region. This will provide an

opportunity to explore with Government the scope for a radical devolution deal for the North East, with substantial devolution of powers and responsibilities.

The Combined Authority will also consider with Government the most appropriate governance structures, including an Elected Mayor, to oversee those new powers.

A key focus of the Combined Authority's ambitions is to push export-led growth and enable business to take advantage of international opportunities."

Mrs Arkley asked the following supplementary question:

"It seems that the Combined Authority did not make enough progress with the Government regarding devolution for it to be included in budget proposals, when many other areas were.

The next 6 weeks will be crucial for the North East to agree a plan, including a Regional Elected Mayor, ensuring that the Chancellor can incorporate this into his comprehensive spending review.

Are you and the other Leaders now working hard to catch up, or will we be left in the slow lane because you can't come to an agreement amongst yourselves?"

Mayor Redfearn replied as follows:

"We are working hard on what we expect from the Government on devolution. We want real devolution and are working hard with the Secretary of State. On the other hand, my concern as Mayor of North Tyneside are the needs of the people of this area and the needs of the people of this area will always come first in my view, and I'm sure that's the same for the Leaders of the other authorities. I will not be pushed into a corner or hurry a decision to please Mr Cameron or Mr Osborne or Mr Jeremy Middleton."

3. Question to the Elected Mayor by Mrs Glynis Barrie of North Shields

Since the Combined Authority took responsibility for overseeing the Tyne and Wear Metro service, the service has worsened. Can the Mayor explain what action she is taking to improve the service, and when will the residents of North Tyneside see an improvement?

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

"In answering your question I think it's important to understand the issues that have resulted in such a variance in the performance of the Metro system over the last number of years, particularly the ageing system and a number of Metro cars over 35 years old.

In 2014 the overall performance of the network fell to its lowest level post concession figure of 64.53% and following that it averaged 76% up to April 2015. Since then we have seen the performance averaging around about 83.4%. However, since performance covering the same period in the previous year was 86.5% it is apparent that improvement is still needed, with the target being 87.2%.

Nexus recently reported at a meeting of the North East Combined Authority, Transport North East Sub Committee on 9 July that performance was below target particularly during the Winter and into the first few months of this year. To deal with that, Nexus have put in

place and are managing a performance improvement plan, working closely with DB Regio, the company which operates trains and stations on its behalf. This has helped reduce the most common causes of delay - door faults have been cut by 30% since April and train power faults by 53% compared to the previous quarter. DB Regio has, meanwhile, taken on 24 new drivers this year; train cancellations where no driver is available have been reduced by 21% and we expect this will continue to fall.

To suggest that it is a result of the Combined Authority taking on the responsibility of overseeing the Metro system, given that it only took over the system just over a year ago, is short sighted and does not deal with the issues that are preventing a constant performance at target levels.

I think it is important that we recognise that people living in North Tyneside benefit from the most frequent train services outside of London, and also enjoy some of the cheapest fares in the country, and trains run up to nine times per hour from some stations at peak times and no less than five times per hour during the day and four times an hour at evenings and weekends right through until midnight.

The Metro now operates without subsidy from the local Councils thanks to efficient planning and delivery by Nexus on behalf of the Combined Authority. The Combined Authority and Nexus have ambitious long-term plans for Metro, and are improving the service in a number of other ways. The Combined Authority set very high standards for the Metro above that of the rest of the UK rail industry.

I am pleased to be able to report that passenger numbers have risen by more than two million in the last year and Government figures show it to be the fastest growing light rail system outside of London.”

Mrs Barrie asked the following supplementary question:

“Nexus are part way through a £700 million programme of Metro reinvestment and have spent more than £2,000 million [*sic*] so far, so I don’t understand how it can be acceptable for the Metro to operate less well now after all this expenditure than it did previously.

Can the Mayor ensure a quarterly update concerning the Tyne and Wear Metro, outlining the improvements that Councillor Harrison has suggested, is brought to full Council?”

Councillor J Harrison replied as follows:

“I think it is important that a quarterly update is given. This is why through the Combined Authority setting up a Tyne and Wear Sub Committee we will be looking at the performance on a quarterly basis.

The reality is there is a £289¹ million reinvigoration programme and we are half way through that, which takes us to 2020. This was put in place by the last Labour Government who recognised the need to reinvigorate the Metro system. Works that have gone ahead include upgrading of tracks, installation of new escalators, renewal of the electrical system in certain areas, but there is still more work to be done. In reality the main issue for the failure of the performance of the Metro system is the Metro cars themselves - they are 35

¹ This figure was corrected to £389million in confirming the minutes at the Council meeting held on 24 September 2015.

and in some cases 40 years old; lack of drivers; door failures. There is a need to upgrade the system but we clearly have to further invest in new Metro cars.”

4. Question to the Elected Mayor by Mr Frank Austin of Whitley Bay

“Recent reports have shown that the decision taken by Northumberland County Council to suspend parking charges throughout the County has been a huge success. Tourism has increased substantially and many Town Centres within Northumberland are reporting increased footfall and turnover (as high as 24% in some areas) for Local Traders and businesses. In addition, shops which have stood empty for some time have now re-opened with new businesses emerging.

I would therefore, once again, like to ask the Elected Mayor to consider introducing a similar scheme in North Tyneside, which would lead to an increase in tourism and allow traders and businesses to maximise their customer potential and, more effectively, compete against out-of-town shopping centres such as Silverlink.

I would stress that the existing restrictions and penalties would still be expected to stand.”

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

“As you know, tourism is very important to North Tyneside as is supporting our town centres and businesses. Therefore it is important that parking management is carried out in a way that ensures maximum turnover of spaces in some locations. The existing parking facilities in our town centres have been developed to meet the needs of both residents and businesses. There are a range of parking options available including short stay facilities to encourage high turnover in the primary shopping areas, medium stay and long stay parking. Residents parking permits are offered in the majority of these areas.

The Council also provides free parking at all Council managed car parks in its main town centres.

However, we will continue to listen to businesses, residents and tourists to strike the right balance in the same way that Northumberland County Council have in Seahouses, Craster, Holy Island and Corbridge where charges still apply.”

5. Question to the Elected Mayor by Mrs Wendy Adams of Whitley Bay

Until recently, Council Plans regarding Whitley Bay's Seafront Regeneration included the proposal to construct a quality 5* Hotel with additional facilities like conferencing and spa suites, next to the Dome. However, this has now been downgraded to a budget hotel with no additional facilities.

Unlike the promised 5* outfit, this will directly compete with existing accommodation provision and is unlikely to bring in additional visitors: (a) without the add-on facilities and (b) prior to significant progress on the overall regeneration. It will simply spread existing visitors even more thinly than at present.

Many proprietors are extremely concerned about the detrimental effect to their businesses, livelihoods and in many cases, their own homes. It's feared a new hotel of this nature will lead to closures, possible bankruptcy and for those who live-in, proprietors' own homelessness. Alternatively they may be forced to accommodate a less desirable

client group simply to survive. This would compound the already problematic issues of increased anti-social behaviour and crime and isn't something most existing businesses wish to do.

Furthermore, unlike the purchasing policies of corporate chains, existing proprietors shop locally, supporting other small businesses in the process. Therefore closures are likely to cause further detriment to the local economy of the town.

Would the Mayor explain fully the decision to downgrade this plan and agree that any premature building of a new budget hotel is likely to have an adverse and potentially disastrous impact on many existing accommodation providers and other retail & leisure outlets throughout the town centre?

Finally would the Mayor be prepared to meet with sector representatives to discuss this matter further?

The Elected Mayor replied as follows:

“The inclusion of a hotel in the regeneration of Whitley Bay Seafront has been a longstanding objective as this is an important aspect of growing the overnight visitor market in North Tyneside and boosting the local economy. Evidence shows that overnight visitors spend on average £80 per person per day compared to £23 per person by day visitors. A new 68 bed hotel could therefore generate up to £2m new spend per annum by overnight visitors (based upon an average 70% occupancy), much of which will be spent in the local shops, leisure facilities, etc. This additional spend by overnight visitors has significant benefits for the local economy, supporting existing and new businesses and jobs. Economic appraisals prepared to assess the benefits of the hotel and associated restaurant indicate that these new developments will also generate additional spend of up to about £1m per annum by staff.

A number of efforts have been made to secure a 4 or 5 star hotel on the Spanish City Island site without success. However, given the importance of securing a new hotel to maintain the growth of the overnight visitor economy in North Tyneside and take advantage of the growth of international visitors it is considered that a relaxation of the requirements to permit a 3 star hotel on the Spanish City Island site is necessary and would not adversely affect existing accommodation in the local area. The hotel development will take up to 18 months to complete the planning and subsequent construction processes. Over this period of time it is expected that there will be continued growth in the overnight visitor market stimulated by the Authority's Whitley Bay Seafront Master Plan proposals, which will see £36m of investment in new residential and commercial developments, improving the public realm, providing new and improved leisure and cultural facilities and exciting opportunities for new and existing businesses.

I am happy to meet sector representatives and will request the relevant Council officers to work closely with the existing accommodation providers to maximise the potential of their businesses in the lead up to the new hotel being completed.”

C29/07/15 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Brooks, C Burdis, C Davis, S Graham, N Huscroft, F Lott, W Lott, K Osborne, J Pickard, M Rankin and M Thirlaway.

C30/07/15 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

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

C31/07/15 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 18 June 2015 be taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chair.

C32/07/15 Active North Tyneside

The Council received a report which presented details on the first year of the Active North Tyneside initiative.

A comprehensive description of the outcomes and successes of the first year of Active North Tyneside during 2014-2015 was contained in the Appendix to the report. It also described some of the important lessons learned.

The engagement and consultation programme had produced quantitative data from a survey and demonstrated that people broadly understood the health benefits of physical activity. It also demonstrated that there was willingness for residents to become more active however, finding the time, overcoming illness and health issues, finding the energy and the cost prohibited access. This feedback had been used to develop some early pilot initiatives and the branding and marketing messages of Active North Tyneside. The initiative had been formally and successfully launched in January 2015 with a comprehensive marketing campaign and the launch of a bespoke website.

During 2014-2015 there had been 25,696 attendances to universal and targeted programmes. All of the programmes were free of charge for those attending. In addition to the work on the ground, Active North Tyneside was being recognised as a national exemplar of good practice in relation to embedding public health into mainstream Authority services. Following a visit to North Tyneside in April 2015 the Chief Executive of Public Health England, Duncan Selbie, had described the Active North Tyneside initiative as “public health in action”

Building on the successes and the lessons learned during year one, a comprehensive delivery programme for 2015- 2016 was already in place and was being rolled out.

The Healthy4Life public health nurses and Food and Health Team were firmly embedded within the Active North Tyneside initiative and the work of these specialists was coordinated and managed by the Sport and Leisure service and co-located in the same office as the Active North Tyneside team.

More bespoke and wider public health training for the Sport and Leisure team would further embed the principles of Making Every Contact Count within the service. This would help to provide brief advice to residents in relation to a number of lifestyle factors. It was

also anticipated that in time this training would be rolled out by the Sport and Leisure team to other Council front line services.

It was moved by Councillor L Spillard and seconded by Councillor E Darke that:

“Council note the contents of the 2014-2015 report on the Active North Tyneside initiative and its success to date.”

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

C33/07/15 A New Approach to Ward Member Briefings

The Council received a report which provided an update on the outcomes of the Ward Member Briefings held in March 2015 and was requested to approve the next set of actions.

The Cabinet had previously discussed how to ensure Ward Members were better briefed and how they might have greater influence in local investment decisions. Additionally, how they might understand the team delivering key services in each Ward and the way in which Ward Members might be able to make a difference to community capacity.

Ward Member Briefings had been held throughout March 2015 to allow all 60 Members to attend individual briefings specific to their Ward. A briefing pack had been distributed to all Members who attended the sessions, the pack included information on Responsibilities; Investment and Local Issues.

In total, 14 Wards had taken up the offer of a briefing session. A total of 21 Officers had attended all 14 sessions. 15 Councillors out of 42 had completed the evaluation form and 13 out of the 21 Officers had returned completed forms. The overall satisfaction gathered from the returned forms was very positive.

A list of promises and actions from the briefing sessions were noted. The majority of issues raised from the briefings had been completed, outstanding actions were in hand, and Officers were continuing to keep Members fully updated.

In terms of Local Infrastructure Projects, there were a set of straight forward tests including Ownership and Responsibility, Value for Money, Impact and Deliverability, which would be applied and a programme agreed by Cabinet. Once applied a draft programme would be considered by the Investment Programme Board.

Cabinet had also agreed to approve small grants of £200 per Member to increase community capacity. The Deputy Mayor reported that to date there had been 8 Local Community Capacity Grant forms received.

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

“Council:

- (1) note the outcomes of the evaluation set out in Section 1.5 of the report; and
- (2) endorse the future plans for the September 2015 briefings.”

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

C34/07/15 Protocol on use of Social Media by Members

The Council received a report on a draft Protocol on the use of social media by Members. The report had been deferred at the Annual Council meeting to enable the draft protocol to be referred to the Members Support Group for further consideration (Minute C15/05/15).

The Members Support Group had considered the draft Protocol at its meeting on 1 July 2015, and had agreed to recommend approval of the Protocol and to refer it back to Council.

The protocol was appended to the report.

In response to a Member's query, the Head of Law and Governance undertook to consider, in consultation with the Constitution Task Group, as appropriate, the wording of the protocol to ensure that the relevant distinction between the role of Members as Councillors and private individuals was clear.

It was moved by Councillor B Pickard and seconded by Councillor J O'Shea that:

"Council approve the Protocol on the use of Social Media by Members set out in Appendix A to the report and refer the Protocol 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 agreed.

C35/07/15 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.

C36/07/15 Chair's Announcements

The Chair made the following announcements:

- He thanked all staff involved in contributing to the delivery of this year's successful Mouth of the Tyne event.
- He also thanked personnel from the HMS Tyne which was docked in the Tyne for their warm hospitality during his recent visit to the ship.

C37/07/15 Elected Mayor's Announcements

The Elected Mayor reminded Members to consider the public perception of comments they make to the press and in the public domain, and urged Members to be open and honest in their communications.

She referred to the success of the Authority, in particular the Business Team, in attracting

businesses to North Tyneside, with 2,000 new jobs being created in the borough and 1,000 jobs transferred from other areas. This was being driven by the Authority and not the Local Enterprise Partnership, as had been claimed in a recent broadcast.

The Mayor stated that she was not aware of the proposal to demolish the balustrades at the Central Promenade, Whitley Bay until the matter had been considered at a recent meeting of the Planning Committee. She referred to a proposed capital scheme relating to the Central Promenade that had been considered by the Major Projects Group in 2011, and which had subsequently formed part of the previous administration's capital plan budget.

She also highlighted other examples of information produced by some Members which may have been misperceived by members of the public, including the issue of members' allowances and the demolition of derelict buildings at the seafront, Whitley Bay.

The Mayor stressed that before and since she was elected, she has listened to residents of the borough and would continue to do so, and that demolishing those derelict buildings in Whitley Bay had been done in response to feedback from residents.

She reiterated that she would continue to challenge any misinformation conveyed to the residents of North Tyneside, and she and her Cabinet would take full responsibility for their decisions and would continue to strive for a Council that was respected by the residents.

C38/07/15 Questions by Members of the Council

The Council was advised that a joint response would be provided to questions 1 and 2.

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

Can the Mayor confirm that the proposed cycle route into Tynemouth will be restricted to one way on either side of Broadway following the direction of travel and, if so, how will it be policed?

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

What is the Mayor doing to mitigate the parking problems that the proposed cycle path on Broadway, in Tynemouth, will cause?

Councillor J Harrison replied to Questions 1 and 2 on behalf of the Elected Mayor as follows:

"Yes, I can confirm that the scheme is designed to be one way, in line with the direction of travel on each side of the carriageway.

At this stage there is no intention to police this area as there is no statutory requirement to do so. There is no evidence to suggest that this is required.

I think it is important to note that the Council have a good track record of successfully introducing cycle paths in North Tyneside and making cycling safe. This particular scheme is in accordance with North Tyneside's Road Safety and Cycling strategies and will promote sustainable transport within North Tyneside and will improve safety for cyclists.

If parking problems become an issue as part of the introduction of this scheme a mandatory cycle lane or waiting restriction could be introduced.”

Councillor Lilly asked the following supplementary question in relation to Question 1: If children cycling to school do wish to follow the regulations many of them will have to cross one of the busiest roads in North Tyneside at this time of day. How can we as a Council say that this is a safe scheme and would the Cabinet Member comment on a statement from an officer who said to a resident that safety is not the Council’s problem with regard to this scheme, but it is the responsibility of parents?”

Councillor Harrison replied as follows:

“Safety of children in North Tyneside is the responsibility of all of us and I’m rather disturbed to hear that an officer has said that. With reference to children and young people using that cycleway, if that becomes an issue I can certainly go back and look into it to try to make it as safe as possible for our young people to use.”

Councillor Lilly asked the following supplementary question in relation to Question 2:

“I know that the hardstanding that people use to park on at the moment is not their property; it is Council property. I believe people are now going to have to park elsewhere – they will park no doubt, as will their visitors, along the Broadway, which again is a very busy road, with two bus stops at the end of the cycle path. What plans do we have to alleviate this congestion and are there any plans or will there be plans to double yellow-line this stretch of road?”

Councillor Harrison replied as follows:

“If this issue does materialise you have my assurance that we will look into it.”

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

Can the Mayor explain why it is taking so long to offer North Shields Youth and Community Centre a new lease?

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

“North Shields Youth and Community Centre enjoy a peppercorn rent arrangement and have done since 1 July 1964.

The lease was due for renewal on 30 June 2014. This was at a time when the Council had suspended its Community Lettings Policy in order to review the Councils’ approach to this kind of arrangement, with the issue of peppercorn rent not being suitable for moving forward.

Since June 2014 North Shields Youth and Community Centre have continued to enjoy the peppercorn rent associated with their original lease.

On 13 July Cabinet approved a “Better Together Strategy”. This sets out how the Council and the Community and Voluntary Sector will work together for the benefit of residents of North Tyneside. Part of this will involve a review of all Council land and assets occupied

by community organisations. Community lettings such as North Shields Youth and Community Centre will be considered under this new strategy.

However, in the interim period the Centre can continue to hold over in occupation under the terms of the original lease, including the peppercorn rent arrangement. Officers visited the Centre last year and explained that by holding over in occupation under the original lease they have full protection of tenure until new letting arrangements are put in place.

North Shields Youth and Community Centre have been made aware of this position and officers will contact the Centre again to discuss their options in moving forward.”

Councillor Lilly asked the following supplementary question:

“At the moment the Centre has no formal lease. The problem is that even though they have been told that they can have a letter of support the grant awarding bodies do not accept this letter of support and therefore it’s not worth the paper it’s written on. As a result, this club has been denied access to apply for much needed grant money, so can Councillor Pickard tell us when the club might have a lease so that they can access this money.”

Councillor Pickard replied as follows:

“As I said, they can continue in occupation. I wasn’t aware they were having problems in applying for grant, but I’ll speak to the officers to see what the possible timescales for the agreement of the lease are and I will let you know what the outcome of those discussions are.”

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

Could the Mayor inform us why the Council intends to dispose of a number of open space land sites to Cheviot Housing Association?

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

“As this Chamber is aware, this Council has ambitious plans to deliver 3,000 affordable homes into North Tyneside by 2024. The acceleration of build can clearly be seen with the Council directly building 104 new affordable homes this year.

To meet our target of 3,000 homes, it is important that the Council continues to work with a range of partners. This means that we will continue to work with Registered Providers to identify suitable sites for new affordable homes as Registered providers have the ability to secure additional investment.

I am pleased to be able to report that Registered Providers and developers working in partnership with the Council have successfully brought a total of £7.2m grant funding in to North Tyneside from the Homes and Communities Agency’s 2015-2018 Grant Programme. This will see a further 300 new affordable homes built in the Borough by 2018/2019.

The 3 Registered Providers appointed by the Council following a procurement exercise are Bernicia (which includes the former Cheviot Housing Association), Home Group and ISOS. The Council intends to dispose of the open space land sites to the Registered Providers

who will use the Homes and Communities Agency Grant to build much needed affordable homes.”

Councillor Mason asked the following supplementary question:

“As Councillor Harrison is well aware we’ve got the draft plan. The green denotes open space; the pink denotes building land. Why not stick to the building land?”

Councillor Harrison replied as follows:

“The land that you’re looking at is though the HRA account, and it’s land we have looked into, which is surplus to our requirements. We’re planning to maintain the green and open spaces and if you look at the plans for the Local Plan, we want to ensure that we have a greenbelt and our parks, etc within North Tyneside. So we are trying to maintain the green spaces within the Borough. The reality is that the programme has to start with those brownfield areas that have been identified, but in order to take the opportunity to meet that target we’ve certainly got to look at those areas and we will do that by consulting with local residents and the local councillors in those areas. Some of those plots of land we’ve looked at have actually been rejected and we’ve looked at other areas. For example Weetslade ward we looked at McCracken Drive. Clearly the local community weren’t happy with that, and the ward councilors were opposed to it, so therefore we had to identify other pieces of land. So we’re looking at land that is surplus to requirements and we are working with local communities and councillors to try to meet the target of 3,000 affordable homes in North Tyneside.”

5. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor K Barrie

The issue of new toilets in Cullercoats harbour has been brought to the attention of the Mayor at “Listening Events” and other forums since she was elected. We are now in 2015 and Cullercoats has had another Harbour Day with the toilets still not open. Can the Mayor inform residents why, after such a long time, the toilets are still not open and will she set a date for them to be opened?

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

“As I have already indicated this evening, it is important that we have clean and accessible public toilet facilities for residents and visitors alike. Cullercoats harbour is no different.

I am therefore disappointed to learn that this issue has been ongoing since 2011 when following an extensive consultation exercise in the area a number of priorities for investment in Cullercoats Bay including the provision of improved public toilet facilities were identified.

I have been advised this week, by Council officers, that Kier will require a further two weeks to complete the installation of the utilities. I am disappointed to learn that the main delay seems to be the new water connection, which appears to have ran into a problem with Northumbrian Water Limited (NWL), despite NWL agreeing the installation design. As a result of these findings I have this week asked officers to contact the Chief Executive of NWL to try and bring this forward.

The Elected Mayor assures me that the original intention was for a toilet facility to be installed by Easter this year. I understand that a project request form was submitted to

Kier in April 2014 and a number of discussions took place to clarify the extent of the works required. Originally there were only to be supplies to the toilet facility and kiosk. However, later the need for work and electricity supplies to the brae to assist local fishermen was identified and included in the works. I have been informed by officers that this should not have affected the installation of the supply to the toilet facility and kiosk.

Following discussion with officers this week I understand Kier have blamed the recent delay on losing their agreed slot with the utility companies due to changes in the supplies being instructed to provide additional connection for the fishermen. I personally do not believe that this stands up as Kier have known for several months that additional connections were required but this would not have prevented the supplies to the toilet facility and kiosk being completed in the meantime.

As I said earlier this is very disappointing as it is now more than one year since we placed a project request with Kier. Despite regular reminders and requests for project updates this does not seem to have been a priority for them and was not dealt with in accordance with our instructions. I have therefore asked that this matter be investigated to ensure that this type of delay does not happen in the future.

In the meantime I would like to take this opportunity to apologise to those residents and visitors who have long been waiting this vital toilet facility in the area.”

Councillor Barrie asked the following supplementary question:

“I am disappointed that two and a half years after the election the toilets are not yet open. Residents and visitors are furious that you have not kept your promise to open the toilets in Cullercoats Bay. Will the Mayor take urgent action to ensure that these facilities are open within the next two to three weeks and will she hold an investigation to establish the reasons for the long delay?”

Councillor Stirling replied as follows:

“That’s actually what I did promise in my reply. However, this matter has been going on since 2011 when another administration was in charge.”

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

From a recent carers survey, I was disappointed to note that the overall satisfaction of carers with North Tyneside Social Services showed that only 43.4% of users are satisfied with the service offered to them. Will the Mayor take immediate action, by holding an internal investigation, to find out why the satisfaction level is so low?

Councillor Waggott-Fairley replied on behalf of the Elected Mayor as follows:

“Councillor Barrie, thank you for asking this question.

As carers’ champion for North Tyneside I am always pleased to be able to have an opportunity to highlight the fantastic work that carers, who are the unsung heroes in our community, do in North Tyneside. I am also happy to talk about the support we give them to help them to continue in their caring role. Whilst your question looks at the headline numbers that were quoted in the national 2014/15 carers’ survey in a particular way, when you actually look at the complete picture, further data analysis reveals a somewhat different picture, with:

- Almost 80% of our carers saying that they are Quite Satisfied, Very Satisfied, or Extremely Satisfied;
- Around 13% had no strong feelings either way; and
- Fewer than 1 in 10, that's only (9.23%) who are not entirely happy with our support and services.

Of course, I agree we cannot afford to be complacent and we will always strive to do better by learning from those other councils whose survey results are stronger and most importantly by listening to what our carers tell us. However, we have improved by 2 percentage points, that's 41.3% to 43.4% since the last survey was conducted in 2012, a marked upward trend I'm sure you'll agree.

Our performance is still above the national average for England and other Metropolitan Districts. So, taking all these matters into consideration I have decided that it will not be beneficial to hold an internal investigation as this will only divert much needed resources from getting on with the job of supporting the very people who seek to assist."

Councillor Barrie asked the following supplementary question:

"As the Mayor knows, carers are crucial in supporting families and friends. The outcome of a recent carers' survey showed that nearly 60% of carers are dissatisfied with the service provided by Social Services in North Tyneside.

Does the Mayor accept that the services are poor and would she and her Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care consider resigning over this serious matter?"

Councillor Waggott-Fairley replied as follows:

"We can't afford to be complacent, but we're still higher than most of the metropolitan districts average and certainly higher than the national average for England. We are an improving service, and have improved since the last survey was taken, which was under your administration. This is all despite the savage cuts to the Council budget by the Tory Government, which has impacted severely on aspects of the service in Social Care, so no, I don't think that's an option."