

Local Government Act 1972

Borough of North Tyneside

19 November 2015

At the meeting of the Council of the Borough of North Tyneside duly convened and held on Thursday 19 November 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 Mrs A Austin	Councillor C Johnson
Councillor K Barrie	Councillor D Lilly
Councillor L Bell	Councillor F Lott
Councillor K L Bolger	Councillor W Lott
Councillor B Burdis	Councillor G Madden
Councillor C A Burdis	Councillor M Madden
Councillor J Cassidy	Councillor P Mason
Councillor K A Clark	Councillor D McGarr
Councillor S L Cox	Councillor Mrs P McIntyre
Councillor EN Darke	Councillor D McMeekan
Councillor L Darke	Councillor A McMullen
Councillor S Day	Councillor Mrs S E Mortimer
Councillor D Drummond	Councillor T Mulvenna
Councillor P Earley	Councillor A Newman
Councillor R Glindon	Councillor P Oliver
Councillor S Graham	Councillor N A Percy
Councillor I Grayson	Councillor C B Pickard
Councillor M A Green	Councillor J Pickard
Councillor M Hall	Councillor M Rankin
Councillor J L L Harrison	Councillor L A Spillard
Councillor E F J Hodson	Councillor J Stirling
Councillor Janet Hunter	Councillor M Thirlaway
Councillor John Hunter	Councillor A Waggott-Fairley
Councillor M Huscroft	Councillor J I Walker
Councillor N J Huscroft	Councillor Mrs J A Wallace

C54/11/15 Minute's Silence

A minute's silence was observed in respect of the death of former Councillor Liddell Johnston and the victims of the recent terrorist attacks in Paris.

C55/11/15 Public Questions

No valid public questions on notice had been received for a response at this meeting.

C56/11/15 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J M Allan, A Arkle, J O'Shea, L J Miller, J Munby and M Reynolds.

C57/11/15 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

The following declarations of interest were made:

Councillor A Newman declared a non-registerable personal interest in relation to the Motion (Minute C59/11/15).

Councillor P McIntyre declared a registerable personal interest in relation to the Motion (Minute C59/11/15) as she was employed by the DWP.

Councillor A McMullen declared a registerable personal interest in relation to the item on the Three Year Review of North Tyneside Council Statement of Licensing Policy (Gambling) (Minute C62/11/15) as he held a personal licence.

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

C58/11/15 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the Council meetings held on 24 September 2015 (Ordinary) and 20 October 2015 (Extraordinary) be taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chair, subject to the following correction:

Minute C43/09/15 – the result of the vote on the amendment to the Motion being amended from '44 votes to 9 votes' to '43 votes to 9 votes'.

C59/11/15 Motion

Motion with notice, signed by Councillors C Davis, M Thirlaway and J O'Shea:

It was moved by Councillor M Thirlaway and seconded by Councillor L Spillard that:

"There can no longer be any doubt that Tax Credit reductions will leave many low-income working families struggling to make ends meet. The Government is right to say that the National Living Wage will benefit some low-income workers, and be a very welcome step towards an economy with lower need for welfare. But independent research from organisations like the Institute for Fiscal Studies, the Centre for Social Justice and the Resolution Foundation have found that, overall, many families will be out of pocket as a result of the tax credit cuts due to be implemented in April 2016.

Lone parents, those with more than two children and families with one main breadwinner will see their living standards stagnate or even fall. It is important to note that only 6 per cent of low income families with children have two-parents in full-time work, and the average across the population is 1.6 full-time workers per family. This raises a question around how these plans pass the Government's 'family test', which pledges to consider how new policies will support strong family relationships.

Tax Credit cuts cannot be easily balanced simply by raising wages. The National Living Wage was developed to boost the income of individual workers and make sure that businesses reward their workforce fairly. Tax Credits were introduced to support working families by recognising the extra expenses of raising a family, a role businesses cannot be expected to fill, and are paid to households rather than to individual workers.

We need to consider how poverty affects whole households and communities. Looking at the issue as a simple matter of raising incomes across the board ignores the huge impact that individuals' circumstances have on their needs, and so will leave many families behind. As a benefit which is paid to households rather than individuals, Tax Credits are a vital piece of support for many families who need to bridge the gap between low-paid work and the costs of raising a family.

Child poverty costs the UK £29 billion each year, giving the state and the taxpayer a direct interest in supporting parents and children. Stagnant productivity makes it more difficult for individuals to climb the career ladder and increase their earnings, as well as affecting businesses' bottom lines.

If welfare, including Tax Credits, is reduced without measures to tackle the underlying drivers of poverty, the impact on low earners will be disastrous.

This Council opposes the implementation of these cuts without full transitional protection for a minimum of three years for all low income families and individuals currently receiving tax credit. This Council also requests that officer's report back to the Council the overall effect the welfare bill will have for the residents of North Tyneside."

The Motion, on being put to the meeting, was approved by 43 votes to 0 votes.

C60/11/15 2014/15 Annual Audit Letter

The Council received the 2014/15 Annual Audit Letter from the Authority's appointed auditors, Mazars. The full Letter, covering the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015, was attached as Appendix A to the report.

Councillor R Glindon welcomed Mr Gareth Davies, Mazars, to the meeting and invited him to present the Annual Audit Letter. The Letter covered:

- The overall conclusion in respect of the Authority's Financial Statements which included the annual governance statement;
- The assessment of arrangements to achieve value for money in the Authority's use of resources;
- Future challenges facing the Authority; and
- Fees payable to Mazars for 2014/15.

The District Auditor had issued an unqualified opinion on the Authority's accounts for 2014/15, and an unqualified Value for Money conclusion, confirming that the Authority had adequate arrangements in place for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

It was moved by Councillor R Glindon and seconded by Councillor A McMullen that:

"Council notes the 2014/15 Annual Audit Letter."

A procedural motion was moved by Councillor A McMullen and seconded by Councillor R Glindon that:

'The question be now put.'

The procedural motion, on being put to the meeting, was approved

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

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources thanked the external auditors for their report.

C61/11/15 Change to Polling Places

A report was received which requested Council to agree to changes to the polling places at Broadway Court, Battle Hill (Battle Hill Ward), St Peter's Road Changing Rooms, Wallsend (Howdon Ward) and Cheviot View, West Allotment (Valley Ward) following on from the May 2015 elections when a number of issues had been identified.

The following alternative polling places were proposed:

- Temporary cabin for 2016 only located in the grounds of Broadway Court, Battle Hill
- Temporary cabin located in the car park of St Peter's Road Changing Rooms, Wallsend
- West Allotment Community Centre, Benton Road, West Allotment

Ward Members in the affected Wards and the Elected Mayor had been consulted on the Returning Officer's proposal on the alternative polling places and no objections had been received.

The proposals would be in place for the elections to be held in May 2016.

It was moved by the Elected Mayor and seconded by Councillor B Pickard that:

"Council agrees the alternative locations for the polling places as set out in the Appendix to the report."

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

C62/11/15 Three Year Review of North Tyneside Council Statement of Licensing Policy (Gambling)

A report was received which requested Council to agree the revised Statement of Licensing Policy (Gambling) including the delegation scheme appended at Appendix 1 to the report; and a 'no casino' resolution under Section 166 of the Gambling Act 2005.

Each Local Authority was required by the Gambling Act 2005 to publish a Statement of Licensing Policy and to revise the Policy at least every three years. It provided guidance as to how the Authority would exercise its functions under the Act.

The Statement of Licensing Policy (Gambling) formed part of the Authority's Policy Framework. The report also outlined the final proposals to Council in relation to the draft Policy.

A report on the draft Policy had been considered by Cabinet on 11 May 2015 and thereafter referred to the Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee on 1 June 2015 in accordance with the Authority's Budget and Policy Framework rules contained in Part 4.7 of the Constitution. The draft Gambling Policy had been further considered by the Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee on 5 October 2015 and Cabinet on 9 November 2015 and was now referred to Council for approval.

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

"Council:

- (1) approves the revised Statement of Licensing (Gambling) Policy appearing at Appendix 1 to the report, including the delegation scheme included in the Policy; and
- (2) makes a 'no casino' resolution under Section 166 of the Gambling Act 2005."

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

C63/11/15 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.

C64/11/15 Chair's Announcements

The Chair made the following announcements:

- The closing date for nominations for the Whitley Bay Town Cup 2015 was Friday 27 November 2015, and Members were asked to consider if they knew of anyone who was deserving of the award. Nomination forms were available from Democratic Services.
- Thanks were expressed to all those who had taken part in the Remembrance Day events on 8 November 2015.

C65/11/15 Elected Mayor's Announcements

The Elected Mayor drew Members' attention to a letter that had been received by the Leader of Oxfordshire County Council from the Prime Minister, David Cameron in relation to the 2016/17 Budget.

Many Councillors had been in contact with the Mayor during the last few weeks to highlight their concerns about this letter. The Mayor read the letter out at the meeting.

Following these concerns the Mayor had written to Mr Cameron this week to point out that it was apparent that he was unaware of the cumulative effect of his government cuts to local authorities and to remind him that he now had an opportunity to address this situation during the forthcoming spending review.

The Mayor had also asked for an opportunity to meet with Mr Cameron's policy advisors to discuss how Council leaders were supposed to meet the gap created by the local government finance cuts, at the same time as local authorities faced an increased demand on services and an ageing population.

The Mayor undertook to circulate the response to all Members of the Council once received.

C66/11/15 Questions by Members of the Council

1. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor E Hodson

The Traffic Commissioners have recently condemned the Combined Authority's Bus Contract scheme as unworkable and unaffordable.

Could the Elected Mayor reveal how the Combined Authority now intends to proceed with their responsibilities for bus travel, following this policy rejection?

Councillor J Harrison, Cabinet Member for Housing and Transport, replied on behalf of the Elected Mayor as follows:

The Quality Contracts Scheme (QCS) Board, who were appointed by the Traffic Commissioners, comprises the Traffic Commissioner for the North East and two independent members. They didn't actually condemn the scheme or make a recommendation; they offered an opinion which will have to be considered by those concerned.

Nexus advised that, although the QCS Board accepted that the QCS could "contribute very significantly to the well-being of those who live and work within the area", the Board appears to have chosen not to apply significant weight to those benefits when evaluating proportionality; instead, it appears to have looked at what it considers to be "hard cash impacts" of the proposal on bus operators and concluded that the impact on the bus operators outweigh the benefits to users.

At its meeting on 17 November, the Leadership Board agreed to receive the opinion. It also instructed officers to submit a further report once a more detailed analysis of the QCS Board's opinion has been undertaken. It is only after the Leadership Board considers this further report that a decision will be taken on how the Combined Authority will respond.

In the meantime the Combined Authority will continue to oversee the delivery of public transport services in the region.

I hope this clarifies where we are and next steps.

Councillor Hodson asked the following supplementary question:

The public doesn't seem to know what the Combined Authority does or thinks. Where does the Combined Authority now go to as they have had this major policy rejected?

Councillor Harrison replied as follows:

The Combined Authority is asking for a much more detailed view of what the impact is. There are a number of options they could pursue, for example they could continue discussions with the bus operators and a voluntary partnership agreement could come forward. Alternatively, they could just ignore this point and push forward.

The reality is they need to ensure that the experts look in detail at what the implications of the opinion of the Board are and where we need to go from there, and no doubt the Leadership Board will make an informed decision against that.

2. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor E Hodson

In the 2015/16 Budget debate Councillor F Lott revealed that there was to be an increase in parking revenues of £230,000. He was unable, at that time, to specify how this was to be achieved.

Could the Elected Mayor reveal which charges have been raised, or have yet to be raised, in order to meet Councillor Lott's target? Could she also reveal whether any policy changes have been introduced by which to generate the increased parking revenues?

Councillor J Harrison, Cabinet Member for Housing and Transport, replied on behalf of the Elected Mayor as follows:

Full Council did agree the increase in revenues at its budget meeting. The background to this was one of our business cases which stated that the Cabinet Member at the time would carry out a proposed review of parking permits and car parking charges across the Borough. That was to generate additional income of £230,000. It also stated that we need to keep a close eye on the dynamics of our town centres and the impact any of these proposals will have.

So, initiatives did come forward, the first of which has been put in place is the foreshore parking charges which have increased from 80p to £1.20. We also introduced the town centre car parking from 1p per minute to 2p per minute. Against the background to that we have to look at how we manage our town centres so that income would help meet that budget objective, but I would also point out that we have not increased the 50p parking charge in other areas and we have also maintained free car parking spaces in the three town centres of North Shields, Whitley Bay and Wallsend.

The other area we wanted to look at was residents' permits. I have asked for a scrutiny review through the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny, which will look at the whole situation regarding parking permits, including residents' permits.

I looked at the number of permits within North Tyneside, and there was a considerable number: residents' permits, foreshore permits, permits for businesses, permits for visitors, etc. I am therefore looking to get a much more sensible approach regarding permits to ensure our local communities can park near their homes and not face the intrusion of other people parking just outside of their door.

Councillor Hodson asked the following supplementary question:

The Mayor will be aware that car parking regulation is probably the least respected Council service. There is insufficient car parking space. Councillor Lott's budget plan was to increase the charge for what there is. Does the Mayor have any plans to increase car parking provision as done by the previous administration?

Councillor Harrison replied as follows:

I acknowledge that more people are using cars, and we need to try to get people out of cars and on to public transport, and making sure that opportunity is available. This is why the Quality Contracts scheme is important.

There is an acknowledgement that we need to look towards having more car parking provision, but we need to consider carefully how we would do that, for example would we build multi-storeys and if so, where is the land to do that?

With regard to town centres, my understanding from the officers is that there is adequate town centre car parking at the moment to allow regular turnover. The 50p parking areas allow people to park for much longer and the free parking places have not been fully utilised yet.

You are right that car parking charges have increased, but the Government has cut funding to local authorities forcing them to do this. The income received from car parking goes back into ensuring our roads and car parks are maintained.

We need to allow time to assess the impact of our present policy regarding town centre parking to see whether it is working.

3. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor J Wallace

An Information Leaflet about the draft Local Plan Final Consultation is currently being delivered to residents. Can the Elected Mayor explain why it fails to make clear that only those comments or representations made during the current consultation period will be considered by the Planning Inspector, and that residents who have already made comments need to do so again if they wish their opinions to be considered?

Councillor J Harrison, Cabinet Member for Housing and Transport, replied on behalf of the Elected Mayor as follows:

The leaflet makes it very clear about what people are entitled to do in providing responses to the Council.

I can't understand why you have left it to this late stage to ask the question and go to the media about it. This, to me, is political posturing.

I received a media enquiry this afternoon about your concerns about the local plan and mega-development on certain areas, ie the Murton Gap. If you had been at the Council meeting, you would have heard the officers explain the rationale as to why we are building the number of homes in North Tyneside.

The North Tyneside consultation draft was produced in November 2013. That received in the region of 900 individual responses. In February to March 2015, we consulted again, including the potential sites. We carried out a final consultation, commencing in November 2015.

Three leaflets have actually been circulated and there have been a number of public meetings. We had an engagement meeting today where members of the public could come along, and there is a series of public meetings to allow people to come and talk about their issues.

Issues raised previously by people that were included in the documents presented to the Council meeting will be considered; they are part of the evidence that will go forward when we send this on to the Inspectors.

We are clear that we have been open with the consultation, we are clear on how we want to take that information forward and that this is about a policy that tries to take North Tyneside forward in building the homes for the future.

The proposed North Tyneside Plan isn't about taking up all the green space in the Borough. We started with taking up the brown field sites, and working on from that we are now saying that we are going to retain the green belt. In fact 45% of North Tyneside will actually be green. The total development within the Plan is only 7% of North Tyneside.

It is true that Murton Gap and Killingworth Moor are the two big sites. The reality is that those proposed 3,000 homes in Murton and 2,000 in Killingworth take us up to 2032. We came forward with a masterplan which contains buffer zones, protects various species, protects Murton Village and ensures transport links.

If you have any other ideas where you would locate the additional homes needed please come forward with them. However, if you suggest brown field sites, I would ask where you would find these sites because that was our starting point.