

Local Government Act 1972

Borough of North Tyneside

24 November 2016

At the meeting of the Council of the Borough of North Tyneside duly convened and held on Thursday 24 November 2016 at 6.00 pm in The Chamber at Quadrant at which a quorum of Members were present, that is to say: -

Present

Councillor D McGarr (In the Chair)
N Redfearn (Elected Mayor)

Councillor J Allan	Councillor Janet Hunter
Councillor A Arkle	Councillor M Huscroft
Councillor A Austin	Councillor N J Huscroft
Councillor K Barrie	Councillor C Johnson
Councillor G Bell	Councillor F Lott
Councillor L Bell	Councillor W Lott
Councillor K Bolger	Councillor G Madden
Councillor P Brooks	Councillor M Madden
Councillor C A Burdis	Councillor P Mason
Councillor K A Clark	Councillor Mrs P McIntyre
Councillor D Cox	Councillor D McMeekan
Councillor S L Cox	Councillor A McMullen
Councillor N Craven	Councillor T Mulvenna
Councillor EN Darke	Councillor A Newman
Councillor L Darke	Councillor P Oliver
Councillor C Davis	Councillor K Osbonre
Councillor S Day	Councillor J O'Shea
Councillor D Drummond	Councillor A Percy
Councillor P Earley	Councillor C B Pickard
Councillor R Glindon	Councillor M Rankin
Councillor S Graham	Councillor L Spillard
Councillor I Grayson	Councillor J Stirling
Councillor M A Green	Councillor M Thirlaway
Councillor M Hall	Councillor A Waggott-Fairley
Councillor J L L Harrison	Councillor J I Walker
Councillor E F J Hodson	Councillor Mrs J A Wallace

C45/11/16 Minute's Silence

A minute's silence was observed in respect of the death of former Councillors Alan Furness & Ken Jordan.

C46/11/16 Public Questions

1. Question to the Elected Mayor by Ms S Wright of Battle Hill, Wallsend

Can you explain why under 10 year olds (particularly babies and under 5's) living in flats with communal stairwells (especially above ground floor) are not given a higher priority when allocating housing bands at present, yet the Council will not move an under 10 year old into one of these properties and how will this affect families already living in these flats when the policies change?

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

Thank you for your question.

The Council recognises that some households with young children have difficulty or concerns about safety in accessing flats above ground level. This is one of the reasons why we asked for a review of the Council's Lettings Policy.

Following this review where consultation took place in February and March this year, a higher priority will now be given to households with children aged 5 years and younger and who live in flats above the ground floor. The policy states that North Tyneside tenants living in a flat or maisonette above the ground, with a permanent household child who is aged 5 years or younger and the applicant is finding access to their home difficult due to the stairs will be awarded a higher priority.

Once implemented in spring next year, qualifying applicants will now attract a higher priority under the Councils' Lettings Policy. However it is important that we do not raise applicants' expectations and that residents are aware that the number of homes is still restricted due to high demand and a waiting list of nearly 5,000 applicants requiring homes.

All families already registered for re-housing and currently living in this type of accommodation, will be required to request a review of their housing application. This will be published on the Council's website and in Our North Tyneside publication.

Ms Wright asked the following supplementary question:

I am aware of the policies and I am aware that the Homefinder team are currently experiencing a backlog because of what you've mentioned and because of the correspondence I have already had with them on numerous occasions. However, why are home assessments not carried out when assessing suitability of housing needs, particularly when there are concerns over health and safety?

Councillor J Harrison replied as follows:

We have a housing policy which we are going to review and introduce next year. The needs are assessed and we do take these things into consideration. We have around 15,000 homes and around 5,000 on a waiting list and we have a turnover of somewhere in the region of 1200 people per year. It becomes very difficult to allocate these houses, so we are trying to have a fairer assessment. We are looking at local needs in our new policy and taking health and wellbeing into consideration. I reiterate again we will put this policy in place, but the reality is that there are not enough homes in North Tyneside to meet the demand and it is very difficult to meet that demand even if there are higher needs.

2. Question to the Elected Mayor by Mr P Carruthers of Earsdon

The Northumberland councils support visitors and tourism by virtue of free parking, why can't our Council also provide this support?

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

The parking in Northumberland is not completely free across the County and charges are still applied in some key tourist destinations.

We are trying hard in North Tyneside to reach a balance in relation to the number of car parking spaces we offer as many people who live in the borough would like these restricted. This includes investing significantly in our visitor destinations, especially the seafront, to make them vibrant and popular areas for residents and visitors.

As I am sure you will all agree, it would be impractical for an area the size of the borough to have all free car parking.

There are already over 370 free off-street parking bays provided along the coast in various locations including Priors Haven car park, Front Street (Cullercoats) car park and the Playhouse car park. In addition, in our town centres we have over 260 off-street parking bays which are free and in excess of 970 free parking bays available in car parks elsewhere in the borough.

In the lead up to Christmas there will also be free all day parking on the first four Saturdays in December (3, 10, 17 and 24) at selected sites throughout Whitley Bay.

Free parking at the Beacon Centre car park in North Shields during the whole of December, thanks to support from shopping centre owner New River Retail. This will complement the free parking already available at the Forum car park in Wallsend.

In addition to this we have listened to what a number of local businesses have been telling us about offering free parking in Tynemouth Village in the build-up to Christmas and I am therefore delighted that we are able to make it free to park in Front Street each Saturday next month before Christmas. This is on top of the free parking on offer in Whitley Bay, North Shields and Wallsend and gives added incentive to people to shop locally.

3. Question to the Elected Mayor by Mr L Bones of Tynemouth

Does the Mayor agree that the increases to parking charges on both permits and visitor parking has had a negative impact on Businesses in Tynemouth?

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

On the feedback I have received, no, I would not agree. Also we have already just discussed all of the initiatives that we have been working on to encourage visitors to the area.

The situation in Tynemouth has been discussed at length in this Chamber with all Members of the Council. We all know Tynemouth has some tricky parking issues and no local consensus.

However, I have already promised to pay attention to Tynemouth as part of a wider review of our parking arrangements in the borough.

Mr Bones asked the following supplementary question:

You say you don't agree there has been a negative effect on businesses in Tynemouth, but a recent survey said that 80% of businesses feel the increase in the charges has had a negative effect on their businesses. Are you as an administration out of touch with businesses in Tynemouth or just not listening?

Councillor J Harrison replied as follows:

Well. I am listening, that's why we are having this review. The Members on this side led by our Mayor are concerned to ensure we make all parts of the Borough a better place and certainly helping our local high streets to prosper. On the feedback that I have received, and I have asked for recent information, is whether the recent impact of parking charges on both permits and visitor parking has had a negative effect. The information that I have had back is telling me no, it hasn't. I think the survey that you're referring to was taken into consideration when we were looking at permits, but that information was not necessarily validated as true and accurate.

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

Now that the Whitley Bay Police Station has been relocated to Park View Shopping Centre I would like to ask that the Mayor consider an alternative use for the vacated building. Rather than yet more flats, thought should be given to creating a combined Arts, Leisure and Entertainments Centre, which would be more desirable and help to regenerate and increase footfall within the town centre. At the moment attention is focussed on the seafront and Spanish City area, but thought needs to be given to the wider community of Whitley Bay. The central location of the building offers an ideal opportunity to create a multi-purpose centre for community groups and small businesses. The Jam Jar Cinema, who are looking for a bigger venue, to grow and cater for a larger audience, would be an ideal partner in such a venue. In addition an Arts and Crafts Village could be established along with function rooms for local drama/activity groups. This would be far more beneficial for the residents and traders of Whitley Bay than simply another apartment block.

I am therefore asking the Mayor to give this idea some serious thought, this is an opportunity to put the heart back into Whitley Bay Town Centre, it is an opportunity not to be missed.

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

Unfortunately the former Whitley Bay Police Station is not owned by the Council it is owned by Northumbria Police. They have had it on the market for three months until the closing date last Friday.

I take your point about Arts, Leisure and Entertainment in Whitley Bay and that is why we have ensured that the arts have been central to our regeneration plans for the Coast, despite funding cuts under the previous administration.

The starting point was the £8.5m investment in the refurbishment of the Playhouse, Whitley Bay which has continued to attract huge numbers for its professional shows since 2009. It has also continued to present performances by the various amateur groups in the Borough to great acclaim. The investment in Whitley Bay Customer First Centre adds to the town centre cultural offer.

The annual fireworks display on the Links continues to attract thousands each year. The summer entertainment programme at Spanish City Plaza and Tynemouth Station have entertained residents and visitors for the past three years with high quality street theatre.

Support for local organisations in the area has helped towards the success of the Jam Jar Cinema, the Whitley Bay Film Festival, the Iron Press literary events in Cullercoats and the May Day Carnival developed by the Big Local. Work with Big Local is also assisting them to implement plans connecting the coastal strip and the town centre.

As part of the Whitley Bay Seafront regeneration we are engaging artists and designers in reshaping the Northern Promenade, in order to ensure a creative approach to design.

As part of our successful HLF bid to develop the Dome we are planning new exhibition materials and re-publishing the highly successful Dome of Memories book, with new detail and local stories. The current work on the HLF bid for St. Mary's Lighthouse will, if successful, lead to more exhibition space and greater room for heritage education activities.

It is an exciting time for Whitley Bay, thanks to the hard work of our Elected Mayor. As we move towards completion of the Masterplan works this will provide an unparalleled level of investment for the coast.

All of these projects are improving and will continue to enhance the cultural experience for both residents and visitors to Whitley Bay. They will increase footfall to the coast and the Town Centre.

5. Question to the Elected Mayor by Ms Chillag of North Shields

Women and families fleeing domestic violence need support that can only be provided by experienced, specialist services. Since 2010, 34 domestic violence refuges in the UK have closed their doors due to cuts in local authority funding. What is North Tyneside council

doing to ensure these specialist services remain available for all women who need them, and in particular what is being done to address the needs of black & minority ethnic women, and women on spousal visas who may have no recourse to public funds?

The Elected Mayor replied as follows:

Thank you for raising this important question.

In 2015, the Domestic Abuse Strategic Commissioning Group undertook a review of Domestic Abuse Services in the Borough and developed a new commissioning model aimed at providing comprehensive services to women and families fleeing domestic violence.

Our service has clear referral pathways and covers all the essential needs for victims and their children:

The service provides:

- An Assessment and Immediate Crisis Service;
 - Refuge Support / move on resettlement, provided from a purpose built refuge accommodation;
- An Outreach Service;
- An Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) Service; and
- The delivery of recognised structured group support.

We also provide a Children's therapeutic and support service for children and young people who have witnessed domestic abuse.

This service compliments the domestic abuse services for adults provided in North Tyneside by meeting the needs of children and young people aged 4 – 18 who have witnessed domestic abuse.

Our services in North Tyneside are sensitive to the various needs and cases that are presented to us and whilst we do not have a blanket policy in terms of women seeking refuge who do not have recourse to public funding, our refuge has accommodated women in these circumstances and each case is dealt with on its own merit.

However, as in most council areas there has been some reduction to the level of funding that has been provided. However, here in North Tyneside despite this reduction we have made improvements to services. Most notably in terms of the accommodation provided to accommodate women and families who are fleeing domestic abuse. The service is now located in a modern, purpose built refuge unit, which provides a mix of individual houses and flats, which can accommodate single women or women with families.

Ms Chillag asked the following supplementary question:

Will the Mayor commit to no further reduction in funding for these services?

The Elected Mayor replied as follows:

I would love to commit to no reductions in any services in the Borough. This year we're having to find £30 million from this Council budget and the next few years we're having to find £15m and then £13m and sadly I can't actually make that promise, but we will do our best to look after the most vulnerable people in this Borough.

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

As the Mayor is aware, following further investigative work on the Swan Hunter Regeneration site, the anticipated cost to in-fill the West Berth is higher than originally planned for. In light of this and further consideration of the key outcomes of this programme a request is being made to the funding provider to make alternative use of the funding. The budget has been reprogrammed pending the outcome of the discussions.

Would the Mayor explain what and where is the funding going to be used, and could she give a list of projects and possible costs. If she cannot give the costs then the projects will be acceptable.

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

Thank you for your question. I am delighted to be able to say that we have made excellent progress over the course of the last year in regenerating the Swans site. This has seen the completion of a number of infrastructure and ground works which readies the site for development. We have also seen the completion of the first phase of the Centre for Innovation, which provides new office space to support business and employment growth. I am pleased to say that this is now almost completely let, which is a huge success story for the borough seeing businesses from Aberdeen investing in the borough as they see the potential for the use of the wider site.

As we continue dialogue with businesses interested in bringing forward development on the Swans site, they have consistently stressed the importance of the capability of the Quay to accommodate loads to industry standards. As part of this dialogue some businesses have expressed interest in utilising the wet berth. This together with the increased costs associated with infilling the wet berth, has led us to reprioritise the spending needs of the site to maximise its appeal and potential. We are currently working with the North East Local Enterprise Partnership to discuss the needs of the site and how best to reprogramme the funding into the Yard. We did enter an expression of interest on how we wanted to change that. They have looked at that with their technical team, and just today have come back to us and have asked us to move to the next stage which is a full business case. As and when that comes to fruition we'll keep the Council informed.

C47/11/16 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B Burdis, J Cassidy, John Hunter, K Lee, L Miller, M Reynolds and F Weetman.

C48/11/16 Declarations of Interest

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

C49/11/16 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the Council meeting held on the 22 September 2016 be taken as read, confirmed and signed by the Chair.

C50/11/16 Safeguarding Children presentation

In introduction, the Deputy Chief Executive stated that Safeguarding Children presentation was the second that Council would receive to inform the Councils collective safeguarding arrangements.

The Head of Health, Education, Care and Safeguarding and Senior Manager Safeguarding and Placement Services (interim) delivered the presentation on Safeguarding Children within North Tyneside.

The presentation outlined the overarching responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people through a number of statutory functions under the 1989 and 2004 Children's Act. This included specific duties in relation to children in need and children suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.

It was emphasised that although Local Authorities play a lead role, safeguarding children and protecting them from harm was the responsibility of everyone.

Local agencies, including the police and health services, had also a duty under section 11 of the Children's Act 2004 to ensure that they consider the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children when carrying out their functions.

Under section 10 of the same Act, a similar range of agencies are required to cooperate with local authorities to promote the well-being of children in each local authority area.

There was a requirement to have a Local Safeguarding Children's Board and the presentation outlined its specific objectives, its governance and assurance process.

Council was informed of the operational approach through the front door service, operated by Advice, information, response, officers (Airo). This was a single point of access for children and adult services, where the Airo would identify the specific need and signpost to the appropriate services.

Members were provided statistics to service activity and the challenge for local authorities was the increase in demand in areas of safeguarding in a climate of reducing resources.

The Chair of Council invited Members to ask questions and to make comments.

The Chair thanked the officers for their presentation.

C51/11/16 Motions

Motion 1 signed by Councillors A Waggott-Fairley, L Spillard and C Burdis

It was moved by Councillor A Waggott-Fairley and seconded by Councillor L Spillard that:

“This Council calls upon the Elected Mayor:

To write to the Pensions Minister, the Rt. Hon. Damian Green M.P., requesting his Government to make fair transitional state pension arrangements for all women born between the 6th April 1950 and the 5th April 1960, who are affected by the significant pension changes imposed on them by the Pensions Acts of 1995 and 2011.

Hundreds of thousands of women, some of whom reside in North Tyneside, received little, or no, personal notification of the forthcoming changes. Some women eventually only received two years notice of a six year increase to their state pension age. They are unfairly bearing the burden of rushed and badly implemented legislation to increase the State Pension Age (SPA) based on an accelerated threshold rising too steeply, too quickly.

Retirement plans have been shattered, with devastating consequences. Additionally, many of these women are already out of the employment market, caring for elderly relatives, providing childcare for grandchildren, or suffer age discrimination in the workplace, so struggle to find meaningful long term employment commensurate with their experience.

Women born in this decade are suffering financially, resulting in hardship for many. These are women who have worked hard, raised families and paid their tax and national insurance contributions, with the expectation that they would be financially secure when reaching 60.

Let us be clear, it is not the pension age itself that this motion disputes, it is widely accepted that women and men should retire at the same time.

The issue is that the rise in the women's state pension age has been too steep and rapid and has happened without sufficient notice being given to the women affected, leaving women with no time to make suitable alternative arrangements to plan adequately for their old age.

This is an injustice to all women born in the 1950's and many are living in hardship due to pension changes they were not told about until it was too late to make suitable alternative arrangements.

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

Motion 2 signed by Councillors G Bell, A Newman and C Burdis

It was moved by Councillor G Bell and seconded by Councillor A Newman that:

‘Count Them In’

This Council calls upon the Elected Mayor to express the Council’s support for the campaign being promoted by The Royal British Legion to have questions added to the 2021 UK Census.

By asking for additional questions to the 2021 UK Census we can help public bodies and charities deliver the best services they can for our Armed Forces Community.

There are no official estimates of how many members of the Armed Forces live in North Tyneside.

It would help the Council work out the services needed to offer Veterans in North Tyneside greater support.

It is deeply disappointing that statistically we currently know more about the UK's Jedi community than we do about those who have served their country.

It cannot be right that our servicemen and women, veterans and families are effectively hidden from official statistics.

We as a Council are proud of our servicemen and women and the greater Armed Forces family, please support the motion.

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

Motion 3 signed by Councillors L Spillard, C Davis and B Pickard

It was moved by Councillor L Spillard and seconded by Councillor C Davis that:

The Bus Services Bill motion for Local Authorities

This Council notes:

1. That the Bus Services Bill currently passing through Parliament includes Clause 21 that will effectively “prohibit a local authority from forming a company for the purposes of providing a local bus service”.
2. That the Localism Act (2011) provides general powers of competence to local authorities.
3. That municipal bus companies like Reading and Nottingham provide some of the best bus services in the country and have a successful track record of increasing bus passenger numbers and providing high quality bus services.

This Council believes:

1. Clause 21 contradicts the general powers of competence and the spirit of the Localism Act 2011.
2. If there is a need, then Councils should be able to provide their own bus services.
3. Should they wish, Councils should be legally able to follow the model developed by Reading and Nottingham Local Authorities.
4. Consequently, Clause 21 should be omitted from the Bus Services Bill.

This Council resolves to ask the Mayor:

1. To write to Lord Ahmad and to call on the Department for Transport to omit Clause 21 from the final legislation
2. To write to Alan Campbell MP and Mary Glendon MP to ask them to oppose clause 21 when the Bus Services Bill reaches the House of Commons and ask them to write to Lord Ahmad and the Department of Transport to raise concerns about Clause 21.

The Motion, on being put to the meeting, was approved by 46 votes to 6 votes.

C52/11/16 2015/16 Annual Audit Letter

Council received the 2015/16 Annual Audit Letter from the Authority's appointed auditors Mazars. The full Letter, covering the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 and was attached as Appendix A to the report.

Councillor R Glendon welcomed Ms Diane Harold, Mazars to the meeting, who presented 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 2015/16.

The Auditor had issued an unqualified opinion on the Authority's accounts for 2015/16 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 Glendon and seconded by Councillor B Pickard that:

'Council notes the contents of the Annual Audit letter'

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

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources thanked Mazars and Ms Harold her presentation.

C53/11/16 Changes to Polling Place

A report was received that requested Council to consider and agree the alternative location for polling place at Livingstone Hall, Whitley Bay Baptist Church, Park Parade.

Council heard that a number of other buildings had been investigated but only one was available for electoral use. The alternative polling places was required due to the Age UK building at Park Road, Whitley was no longer available to use.

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

‘Council agree the alternative location for polling place at Livingstone Hall, Whitley Bay Baptist Church, Park Parade’.

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

C54/11/16 Review of Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries

A report was received that asked Council to consider whether to support the initial proposals of the review of the Boundary Commission for England in relation to the North Tyneside and Tynemouth Parliamentary Constituencies.

The intention of the 2018 review was to reduce the number of parliamentary constituencies in the United Kingdom from 650 to 600. Each new constituency with the exception of two specified, should have the same number of electors, being no fewer than 71,031 and no more than 78,507.

The current numbers of electors for the North Tyneside constituency is 76,427 and Tynemouth constituency was 74,618. It had been proposed that no changes to the existing boundaries as both constituencies were within the electoral quota.

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

‘Council support the initial proposals for the Boundary Commission of England’s proposals in relation to the North Tyneside and Tynemouth Parliamentary Constituencies.

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

C55/11/16 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.

C56/11/16 Chair’s Announcements

The Chair made the following announcements:

- A letter of apology received from Councillor M Madden was circulated to all Members and was in relation to the sharing a Facebook article. The Chair informed Members that the apology had been accepted by the complainant.

He reminded Members to exercise caution in the use of social media and drew attention to protocol 8.14 of the Council’s constitution in relation to the use of social media.

Members were reminded that a Multi Faith training session would take place at 2pm and 6pm on 1 March 2017 and encouraged all Members to attend.

- Further training would also take place on:

Scrutiny Skills (facilitated by the Centre of Public Scrutiny) on Monday 5 December at 6pm; and

Planning (facilitated by the Planning Advisory Service) on Wednesday 14 December at 2pm and 6pm.

- The Holocaust Memorial Day event for 2017 would be held in the Council Chamber on Friday 27th January commencing at 10.00 am.
- Thanks were expressed to all those who had taken part in the Remembrance Day events.
- Congratulations were given to Sarah Hunter MBE on becoming the World Rugby Women's Player of the Year.

C57/11/16 Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor also congratulated Sarah Hunter MBE and her parents on her achievements.

C58/11/16 Questions by Members of the Council

1. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor M Rankin

Can the Mayor provide an update on the Homes for Older People project both in Collingwood Ward and across the wider Borough?

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

I would be delighted to provide you with an update and to inform Members that the construction phase of the North Tyneside Living Project (Homes for Older People) has been progressing well for 31 months. During this time we have completed six new build and nine refurbishment schemes. Almost 400 residents are now in their new homes and are happy.

We are now entering the final six months of the construction phase and currently have 11 live construction sites across the borough, four of which are new build developments and the other seven are refurbishment schemes.

I am delighted to be able to report that Windsor Grange Phase 2, Spring View, Fern Dene and Southgate will all be completed before Christmas.

The remaining schemes which includes Crossgates (old Broadway Court), Carville House, Carlton Court, Cheviot View, Victoria Court, Preston Court and Eldon Court, will be completed by March 2017.

In Collingwood Ward, we have two North Tyneside Living schemes; Tamar Close and Phoenix Rise. I'm pleased to report that the refurbishment of Tamar Close was completed on the 30th June and the new build development at Phoenix Rise was completed on 26th August. This has created 47 new apartments in Phoenix Rise and 49 new apartments in Tamar Close.

All of the new build and refurbishment works are being delivered to a high standard, and our tenants are delighted with their new homes. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Elected Mayor for making this one of her top priorities and putting this project back on track. Also to thank everyone involved in helping to make this project a reality.

2. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor M Rankin

Can the Mayor provide an update on the current Beach Road/Coast Road improvement scheme and confirm timescales for completion?

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

Yes, I am pleased to report that good progress is being made on the A1058 Coast Road major highways scheme, which will reduce traffic congestion and improve safety for all road users.

The Coast Road scheme is split into 3 phases:

- Phase 1 involved the widening of Beach Road and which was completed in July this year.
- Phase 2 involves the removal of Billy Mill roundabout and introduction of a signalised junction. Work commenced in July this year and is on schedule to be completed in spring 2017.
- Phase 3 involves the demolition of Norham Road Bridge and replacement with a new signalised bridge. Tenders for this work have recently been received and the contract will be awarded in the next few weeks. Work is expected to start on site in early 2017 and is programmed to be completed December 2017.

Councillor Rankin asked the following supplementary question:

Can the Mayor confirm that the bus lane restriction on Lynn Road accessing the Coast Road will be removed when the scheme is completed at Billy Mill roundabout?

Councillor Harrison replied as follows:

I'm pleased to confirm that because this has been a concern of a lot of people in that area thinking that restriction was going to remain. It was something that we needed to do to allow us to continue with the development and help reduce some of the congestion that would have occurred if we had left it as it was. Yes, once the scheme is completed it will be removed.

3. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor S Cox

Can the Mayor provide an update on the Silverlink Point regeneration scheme, which has recently been undertaken by Crown Estates, and explain its benefits for North Tyneside and its residents?

The Elected Mayor replied as follows:

Thank you for your question Councillor Cox.

This regeneration scheme which has recently opened to the public and will be officially opened tomorrow by me has brought with it a much welcomed £30m investment in the borough.

I am sure that all Members will agree that this exciting new development is brilliant news for the borough – it's a quality development and many residents have complimented it - as it has helped to bring further investment and jobs to the borough including:-

- in excess of 300 jobs;
- the creation of 175 construction jobs;
- training opportunities for 16-24 year olds preparing for a career in retail or construction;
- improvements to the highway network leading onto the Coast Road/A19 roundabout including roads and footpaths.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my congratulations to Crown Estates and their developers for what I think is a quality scheme which only adds to the growing popularity of North Tyneside as a place to live, work and visit.

4. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor D Cox

Can the Mayor provide an update on any feedback received from the teachers, pupils and parents of Whitehouse Lane Primary School on their new school facility which was opened in September of this year?

The Elected Mayor replied as follows:

I would be delighted to as I visited the school a fortnight ago and met with the parents, governors, pupils and grandparents, and they are delighted at the new facility. I can tell you there was some concern from staff about leaving the building and moving to a new building, but now they are there and it's probably the best thing since sliced bread.

I have also received extremely positive feedback from teachers, pupils and parents at Longbenton High School, Marden High School and John Spence High school who are all now settled in their new school buildings.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in securing the funding and making these important schemes happen. It was no small undertaking to ensure over two and a half thousand pupils moved safely into their new schools.

I know a number of Members have already visited the new schools and I would urge other Members to do so, so that they are able to see the amazing environment in which our young pupils are working in today.

5. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor K Barrie

As a Cullercoats Ward Councillor could the Mayor update me if the final solution and established timescales for development at Cullercoats Primary School have been agreed? Could she also update me if the meeting held with Education Funding Agency (July 2016), was successful. Would the Mayor agree to the Cullercoats Ward Councillors being briefed about this Education Investment on a regular basis?

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

Thank you for your question Councillor Barrie.

Members may be interested to know that this is the first application that the Authority have made for Cullercoats Primary School.

Although Cullercoats Primary School were first notified by the Education Funding Agency in February 2015 that they were included in Phase 2 of the Priority Schools Building Programme the Council has been waiting for over 18 months for a decision. A decision is now likely to be received in January 2017.

This is somewhat disappointing as the original notification suggested that feasibility work would commence in July 2015 with firm proposals being agreed in the Autumn of last year.

However, this notification once received, will confirm if Cullercoats Primary School is to be either rebuilt or significantly refurbished.

Subsequent revisions to the timeline resulted in the Education Funding Agency indicating, in December 2015, that Cullercoats Primary School would enter a Feasibility Study between June 2016 and August 2016 as part of the Government's Priority Schools Building Programme, Phase 2.

The Education Funding Agency met with School representatives and Officers of the Authority in July 2016. The purpose of the meeting was for the EFA to introduce the appointed Technical team to the school, outline the proposals in terms of the surveys to be conducted as part of the Feasibility Study and undertake a site tour.

This was completed satisfactorily and the Authority have recently been advised (week commencing 14th November 2016) that the formal announcement, in terms of the proposed solution (rebuild or refurbishment) is likely to be received in January 2017.

It is important to note that it is no fault of the Authority that we have not been able to confirm the solution for the school and deliver the works on site.

I understand that briefings for Ward Members have been made available in each March and September in each of the last two years and included details of our education investment tailored to each Ward.

I note that Councillor Barrie was unable to attend the most recent ward member briefing held on 13 September 2016 where this information was presented, so I am happy to share this with him. I'll also give a commitment to inform ward councillors of the decision once we're notified by the EFA.

6. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor K Barrie

Due to the Reprogramming of the Capital Plan for 2016/19, Will the Mayor tell me how these changes will affect the Cullercoats Ward? For example will there be any loss of proposed projects in Cullercoats Ward or Boundary Wards?

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

The agreed Investment Plan continues to be successfully delivered across the Borough. Some of the changes in finance reported to Cabinet recently simply reflect changes to timescales and funding regimes, not the projects.

It is important to note that no projects are being lost. In fact, it has been another successful year across the borough specifically for our school estate. This has included investment in Cullercoats Ward including Monkhouse Primary, Cullercoats Primary and St Mary's RCVA Primary. In addition the Authority has seen the successful delivery of the new build at Marden High School which opened to staff and pupils in September of this year.

In addition to this work in Cullercoats we have just heard that the announcement on the preferred solution for Cullercoats Primary School will be confirmed in January 2017.

Northumbrian Water have just completed a major drainage improvement scheme at Cullercoats. This involved the installation of a new large diameter sewer. The surface water from Marden Quarry and the surrounding streets now all flows into this new sewer and is taken directly out to sea via Cullercoats Bay, rather than entering the public sewer system which could not cope during storm conditions. This has greatly reduced the risk of flooding to properties in the area.

Our older residents have also benefitted through the refurbishment of Victoria Court as part of the North Tyneside Living Project. This is planned for completion in February 2017.

I hope this helps to give you a flavour of the work that has been carried out in the area.

Councillor Barrie asked the following supplementary question:

Can you tell me why the capital programme had to be reprogrammed?

Councillor Glendon replied as follows:

The capital plan gets reprogrammed every year. It could be due to Government delays, start times on site or finance or many other things. Also due to Brexit we're not getting European money so we've got to find other ways to get it.

7. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor P Mason

Could the Mayor inform us how many "windfall" houses have been given planning permission since the proposed local plan was produced?

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

Since the Draft Local Plan was agreed by Council on the 20th October 2015, 37 new homes have been granted planning permission on five windfall sites.

Councillor Mason asked the following supplementary question:

David Spencer is the inspector presiding over the Local Plan inquiry. Is he aware of the windfall sites?

Councillor Harrison replied as follows:

Yes, he certainly is. Part of our SHLAA actually does identify windfall sites, so between 2010 and March 2016, 29 such sites have been identified which, will deliver 449 new homes, and 337 of those homes have been delivered to date.

The SHLAA is available to the inspector. My understanding is that he has been made aware of these windfall sites, which are an important part of producing a five year housing plan.