

North Tyneside Council Report to Council Date: 23 March 2017

ITEM 1

Title: Questions by
Members of the Public

Notice has been received of the following questions from members of the public to be put to the Council meeting. The Chair of Council has agreed to group together related questions to enable a combined response to be given to Questions 2 & 3 and also to Questions 4, 5, 6 & 7.

1. Question to the Elected Mayor by Mr Mayes of Whitley Bay

Given the noise in press currently about business rates rises, much of which seems to be from areas seeing a rise, can the Mayor advise

1. what the change is likely to mean for businesses in North Tyneside
- 2 . what if any impact that has on North Tyneside's budget?

2. Question to the Elected Mayor by Mrs Eckford of Weetslade

Why, instead of promoting tourism and visitors to our area, which jobs and livelihood are dependant on, have you decided to close the Tourist Information office at Royal Quays?

3. Question to the Elected Mayor by Ms Hull of Whitley Bay

Given that North Tyneside's Tourist Information Centre at Royal Quays occupies a rent free unit in a prime site adjacent to an increasingly busy international ferry terminal, has a retail offer that brings revenue back into North Tyneside Council and increases visibility of events and services in North Tyneside, why will this service close in April?

4. Question to the Elected Mayor by Mr Bunyan of Camperdown

We're aware that you are personally incredibly proud of the local plan for house building that your council have produced. This has in your view, made it necessary for areas like Reed Avenue, Camperdown to be changed from open play space, to land for housing.

We now learn that no children from the NE12 5 postcode have been admitted to George Stephenson High School, despite it being the choice of many parents. This has led to huge disappointment in our community.

Can the Mayor personally give us an assurance that lack of places at a parent's chosen school is not connected to the local plan that she so proudly champions? And as a former headteacher herself, can the Mayor specifically outline what

commitments she is giving to allow parents to have the education that they choose for their children?

5. Question to the Elected Mayor by Ms Marshall of Killingworth

Residents on the Greenhills estate in Killingworth have been devastated to learn that their children are not able to attend their local high school, George Stephenson, for admission in September this year. My son will have to pass our local school on a bus to get to and from the school he has been offered admission to.

I have since learnt that North Tyneside school catchment areas have not been reviewed for 30 years, which is well before the estate that I live on was built. The council local plan has meant that planning permission had been granted for 100's of new homes within our local area, but without a review of the high schools and how they will cope with the influx of children from the new housing estates.

When will high school catchment areas be reviewed in line with the local plan for house building, so that our children will have the option to be able to apply for and attend our local schools, specifically in the Killingworth area?

6. Question to the Elected Mayor by Mr Johnston of Killingworth

I have been a resident of the Greenhills estate, Killingworth, for the last 10 years and during this time, have seen my neighbours' children be offered and accept a place at George Stephenson High School. As the parent of a child shortly to be applying for a secondary school place, I am very concerned to learn that no children from Greenhills have been offered a secondary school place at George Stephenson High School for September 2017, despite it being the first choice of many parents. Can the Mayor please explain why this is the case this year and whether, based on current statistics for the number of current Year 5 children in catchment for George Stephenson High School, parents of children living on Greenhills who are applying for a secondary school place for their child in September 2018 are likely to find themselves in the same situation?

7. Question to the Elected Mayor by Ms Johnson of Killingworth

This year, none of the Year 6 children from the Greenhills estate in Killingworth secured places for George Stephenson High School for September 2017 entry. This has had a huge impact on the local community knowing our children have to travel away from the community in which they know and in which they should be educated. This also poses as a safety concern in my opinion.

Given the amount of new houses being built and furthermore being planned within the area, the problem is simply being compounded. There will be more children in the catchment area and no immediate plans to build a new high school to accommodate them.

Greenhills has a Killingworth address and postal code and should be classed as catchment for GSHS admission purposes, unlike Holystone and Shiremoor. The

catchment area has not been changed in some 30 years and it is my belief that it is no longer fit for purpose and is quite simply out of date.

You state that you are committed to listening to the people's concerns and that they are addressed accordingly, as a Council that cares about what people think.

My question is that do you think it is morally right to exclude this estate and these children for having the opportunity to attend their local high school and whether you agree that the catchment should be changed?

8. Question to the Elected Mayor by Mr Hay of West Monkseaton

I ask a question in view of the 5% increase in council tax acknowledging that with the growing aged population there will inevitably be a strain the social care resources. I further acknowledge the need for a joint strategy for social care with the NHS to free up bed space and resources there, giving the ill and infirmed the most appropriate care they deserve. I therefore accept as a local council tax payer my responsibility to contribute to that. Why however on that basis has the Elected Mayor rejected the opportunity to have an additional £50,000 in the next financial year for mental health, as proposed by Conservative councillors.

However I and I am sure the other rate payers deserve a break down of how this increase was decided and disclosure of what alternative budgets were suggested and if rejected on what rationale. The quality of life of residents is a balance of paying the correct amount of local tax and receiving the appropriate amount of service this includes policing and the precept rise of 2% for 20127 to 2018. Good governance of our finances requires good management and a structured review strategy.

Therefore my question simplified to you Mrs Redfearn, is what were the proposed alternative budget suggestions and why were they rejected?