

# Local Government Act 1972

## Borough of North Tyneside

Thursday, 18 July 2024

At the meeting of the Council of the Borough of North Tyneside duly convened and held on Thursday, 18 July 2024 at 6.00 pm in Chamber - Quadrant, The Silverlink North, Cobalt Business Park, North Tyneside, NE27 0BY at which a quorum of Members were present, that is to say: -

### Present

Councillor S Cox (Chair)  
N Redfearn (Elected Mayor)

Councillor B Burdis	Councillor L Bartoli
Councillor J Bartoli	Councillor Linda Bell
Councillor L Bones	Councillor Louise Bell
Councillor P Bunyan	Councillor B Clark
Councillor K Clark	Councillor J Cruddas
Councillor E Darke	Councillor L Darke
Councillor Day	Councillor S Day
Councillor D Drummond	Councillor P Earley
Councillor S Graham	Councillor C Gray
Councillor I Grayson	Councillor T Hallway
Councillor J Harrison	Councillor A Holdsworth
Councillor N Huscroft	Councillor C Johnson
Councillor H Johnson	Councillor J Johnsson
Councillor D Lilly	Councillor F Lott
Councillor W Lott	Councillor L Marshall
Councillor I McAlpine	Councillor A McMullen
Councillor J Walker	Councillor J Montague
Councillor J Mudzingwa	Councillor T Mulvenna
Councillor M Murphy	Councillor T Neira
Councillor A Newman	Councillor K Nott
Councillor P Oliver	Councillor R O'Keefe
Councillor J O'Shea	Councillor S Phillips

Councillor B Pickard  
Councillor Dr O Scargill  
Councillor J Shaw  
Councillor M Thirlaway  
Councillor J Webster

Councillor W Samuel  
Councillor J Sharp  
Councillor A Spowart  
Councillor J Wallace

**Apologies:** Councillor S Burtenshaw, Councillor J Hunter, Councillor J Kirwin, Councillor C McGinty, Councillor L McMullen and Councillor T Bailey

### **C18/24 Minute Silence**

A minute's silence was observed in respect of the passing of Councillor Bill Caithness and Councillor Paul Richardson who had sadly passed away since the last meeting of council.

### **C19/24 Public Questions**

#### **1. Question to the Elected Mayor from Mr Latham of Whitley Bay**

I am writing to hopefully receive an update on the Murton Gap project. I am a local Monkseaton resident renting and wanting to buy my first home in the area I call home near my children's school. Murton Gap fits this bill.

The Robinson Fields development is well underway however there has been no update in some time on the houses to be built by other developers and when we can expect to see some serious progress on building these homes?

**Councillor C Johnson replied on behalf of the Elected Mayor as follows:**

Following the allocation of land at Murton for housing in the Local Plan (2017) I am very pleased that Story Homes are making good progress with the delivery of the first 300 new homes, including 78 affordable homes, at Robinson Fields. I do recognise the Local Plan makes provision for around 3000 new homes at Murton and I appreciate residents are keen to understand when the remaining homes may be delivered.

I can confirm that a planning application was submitted by Persimmon Homes

for 2700 homes in February 2023 and this remains under consideration. You will appreciate the role of the Authority as Local Planning Authority is a statutory one over which we have no control as Elected Members. Planning officers are working hard to ensure the proposed development is compliant with the Master Plan adopted in 2017 and that the development responds to relevant planning issues raised by statutory and local consultees and residents to ensure that it is of the quality expected. There are a range of issues to balance in terms of design, environmental impact, highway and public transport impacts and development viability, among others. Once planners are ready to prepare a comprehensive report and recommendation, the application will be presented to the Authority's Planning Committee for determination.

## **2. Question to the Elected Mayor from Ms Bowen of Whitley Bay**

From a local resident concerned about Health and Climate Change.

Even if we stopped all fossil fuel usage today, the UK's food emissions alone would exceed the 1.5 degrees limit set by the Paris Agreement. Food accounts for  $\frac{1}{3}$  of greenhouse gas emissions, the majority of which comes from meat and dairy. A 2023 Oxford University analysis found that plant-based diets resulted in 75% less greenhouse gas emissions, water pollution and land use.

Our food systems are incredibly inefficient. 83% of farmland worldwide is used to farm animals but it only supplies 18% of global calories. Transitioning to plant-based diets would create an opportunity to return three quarters of agricultural land to nature. Tragically, Britain has lost more of its natural biodiversity than almost anywhere else in Western Europe.

Furthermore, a study last year by the Office of Health Economics found that just removing meat from weekday lunches alone could prevent hundreds of thousands of cases of heart disease. And increasing plant-based options can help us all eat more fruit and vegetables. In 2018, only 18% of UK children were eating five portions per day.

North Tyneside Council boldly declared a climate emergency in 2019. And your Carbon Net Zero Action Plan is ambitious, but it lacks sufficient emphasis on food emissions. Page 13 of the Plan states "The authority provides a range of healthy balanced meal options in schools and operational buildings which includes non-meat options." But can you go much further?

Several councils, including Edinburgh, Norwich, Lambeth, Exmouth, and Haywards Heath, have endorsed the Plant Based Treaty and initiated real actions to reduce food emissions, such as carbon labelling in schools, plant-based cookery workshops for caterers, promoting Veganuary, and providing fruit and vegetable vouchers for low-income communities.

Will this council boldly confront the climate and health crises by endorsing the Plant Based Treaty?

**Councillor S Graham replied on behalf of the Elected Mayor as follows:**

Thank you for your question

I am very proud of the Council's Carbon Net-Zero 2030 action plan and the positive results this is producing. The actions we have taken have helped us to be awarded an 'A' grade in last year's assessment by the Carbon Disclosure Project, placing us alongside cities such as New York, Tokyo, London, Barcelona, Paris and Sydney.

Additionally, the Council has won first prize in the category of Best Local Authority at the North East Energy Efficiency Awards two years running and went on to finish in second place at the National Awards last year.

The Council totally recognises the impact that sustainable food policies can have on carbon emissions, including the growth, transport and disposal of food.

We do promote low carbon food choices and provide advice and behavioural change to residents and the wider community to reduce food waste, and we are preparing for the introduction of separate food waste collections from households starting in 2026. We provide a range of healthy balanced meal options in our offices and operational buildings which include non-meat options. We manage over 1,200 allotment plots enabling residents to grow their own healthy, sustainable produce.

In November 2022, we adopted the Healthy Weight Declaration which recognises that healthy and sustainable food systems and environments promote food and nutrition security and healthy diets, whilst limiting negative environmental impact.

The North Tyneside Strategic Food Plan was recently agreed at the North Tyneside Health and Wellbeing Board, the focus of which includes access to healthy, desirable and nutritious food and encouraging sustainable food choices and food waste minimisation.

A key principle within the Plant Based Treaty is around reforestation and I am very proud of our work in this area. Since 2021, when we helped to establish the North East Community Forest, we have created 25 hectares of urban woodland and canopy cover and planted over 13,000 trees.

Finally, I am pleased to tell you that a refresh of our Carbon Net-Zero Action Plan will be considered by Cabinet on Monday 29th of July. We fully recognise the important issue of food in our work towards a carbon net-zero future and though we are not signing up to the Plant Based Treaty, our work in this field will continue and our refreshed action plan includes a number of actions and case studies on improving the sustainability of our food.

**Ms Bowen asked the following supplementary question:**

Thank you for your comprehensive answer. Supporting the Plant Based Treaty, I understand is something you don't want to do at this time, but it is a very loud and proud way to show you care about the climate. The organisation can help with promotion for something the Council can be very proud of, I'm very happy to talk to anyone here about how it can be incorporated into the next version, perhaps not this one as it is being completed in the next few days but after that.

**Councillor S Graham responded as follows:**

We will always look at our food production and how we deal with food within the Borough, this is an ongoing piece of work along with all of the other things that we do with transport, heat, light and everything that we do.

### **3. Question to the Elected Mayor from Ms Kinney of North Shields**

Following what was meant to be a temporary move by the Queen Alexandra Sixth Form College and it's subsequent ending of 6<sup>th</sup> form provision, when will a 6<sup>th</sup> form reopen in North Shields to replace this lost provision, given John Spence, Marden and Norham High Schools do not have 6<sup>th</sup> forms?

**Councillor S Phillips replied on behalf of the Elected Mayor as follows:**

Thanks for the question, we are absolutely committed to having a sixth form return to North Shields. In autumn 2023, a Member Working Group supported the Cabinet Member to examine options for Sixth Form provision for North Shields and that reported to Cabinet on 19 February 2024. The policy position of the Mayor and Cabinet is that Sixth Form Provision should be added to John Spence Community High School.

However, this is a matter for the School, the Academy Trust and the DfE. The Mayor and Cabinet have committed to working alongside all three to make this happen, but the process is lengthy.

**Ms Kinney asked the following supplementary question:**

About timeframe, this provision ended in July 2020, and it's already been 4 years without provision of a sixth form. Children in the area are having to struggle to send their children to sixth forms having to travel much further. Having a provision in the area would be much more sustainable with people being able to walk or cycle to the provision.

**Councillor S Phillips responded as follows:**

I absolutely agree, the quicker the better. Unfortunately, we are in a position where we have little say over the timeframe, but we will be working with the three mentioned, the school, the academy trust and the DfE and we will be encouraging them to make this as speedy as possible.

**4. Question to the Elected Mayor from Mr Rides of North Shields**

Given the incoming Government commitment to doubling the size of the co-operative sector, what actions are planned by North Tyneside Council to achieve this goal locally?

**Councillor C Johnson replied on behalf of the Elected Mayor as follows:**

As the government have only just been elected, most of the plans I'll talk about were already in place, and we will have more to say in the near future.

North Tyneside Council are currently delivering programmes to support the growth and development of a diverse business base. The Business Factory, as the Council's business support service works really closely with businesses across North Tyneside in order to help them start up, set up and grow. This includes a clear focus on supporting Social Enterprises, co-operatives and mutuals with a tailored programme dedicated to encouraging mission led businesses to start up and grow in the Borough. This programme is delivered by specialist partners on the Council's behalf, Junction Point, and they provide 1:1 support and access to consultancy to help navigate business models, set up requirements and solutions to barriers to growth. The Business Factory is also about to launch a small grant programme for start-ups which will include an offer to new Social Enterprises and co-operatives.

The North East Combined Authority are delivering specialist support to Social Enterprises including a financing vehicle. The Flexible Social Finance is open to eligible businesses with the aim of providing access to affordable and flexible, repayable finance for socially trading organisations looking to grow their social impacts and improve self-sustainability. Investments are available from of £50k - £400k and repayable over 1-5 years.

We're also working in partnership with VODA have also secured £1.5m to support community and voluntary organisations to deliver more in the North West to address a reported gap in activity. This includes providing small grants to increase community led activity and larger capital grants to help provide capital finance for community led organisations and social enterprises requiring improvements in buildings.

The North East Combined Authority is also looking at Access to Finance for SMEs across the North East. The North East Fund has provided a suite of different financing models for a range of SMEs over the last 6 years, investing £152m. Past delivery is currently being evaluated to help inform access to finance vehicles moving forward and Cooperative finance will form part of the considerations.

North Tyneside Council is committed to developing an inclusive economy ensuring that journey of growth reaches all the residents in the Borough. This ambition is set out in the Councils Inclusive Economic Strategy. To complement and develop this thinking, the Council are developing a Business Engagement Strategy and Economic Strategy that will set out a vision for inclusive growth in

the Borough. An element of this will set out how business support efforts will continue to focus on supporting mission led businesses and how this may be amplified to improve and increase support to cooperatives and mutuals in line with the new government's pledge. The Economic Strategy will also include how Cooperatives can link with Net Zero plans, Poverty prevention programmes, affordable housing and social care provision.

While we already have lots of things in the works, it's only been two short weeks since the Government were elected so we have had nothing yet directly from the government.

**Mr Rides asked the following supplementary question:**

The response seems to be about general picture of conventional business support, my initial question was specifically about doubling the co-operative sector within North Tyneside.

**Councillor C Johnson responded as follows:**

I opened the response saying it's only been two short weeks since the Government were elected so it will take us more time to put plans into place. Lots of members on the Labour side are members of co-operatives as well, and we will be working to double the size of the co-operative sector.

**5. Question to the Elected Mayor from Ms Pearson of Whitley Bay**

I recently submitted a FOI to Northumbria Water and they informed me that the beach at Cullercoats is the responsibility of North Tyneside council. Of course, without clean water, the beach will always be dirty.

What are the council doing to make sure Northumbria Water are fulfilling their side of cleaning up the problem? What steps are North Tyneside council taking to ensure that Northumbria Water are putting actions in place to improve water quality in a timely manner? When can we expect Cullercoats Bay water to be at a standard equivalent to Longsands and Whitley Bay?

**Councillor H Johnson replied on behalf of the Elected Mayor as follows:**

Thank you for your question.



We are extremely proud of our award-winning coastline and beaches, including the beach and facilities at Cullercoats. Since 2017, we have been working alongside Northumbrian Water and the Environment Agency to investigate water quality concerns at Cullercoats.

Northumbrian Water have undertaken investigations into their own assets and carried out improvement works identified as part of this process. A significant amount of work has been carried out on both privately-owned sites and public spaces to try and identify the source of the pollution. This includes investigating and rectifying any pipework connections and possible pollution pathways, the re-sealing of gullies and a historic water culvert has been capped off and rediverted.

The Environment Agency is responsible for monitoring, assessing, and classifying bathing water. Investigations and works carried out to date are pointing towards contaminated groundwater as the primary cause for concern. The source of contamination is yet to be identified; however, we continue to work alongside Northumbrian Water and the Environment Agency on this important issue.

Cullercoats remains a thriving and wonderful beach for locals and visitors to enjoy, with fantastic facilities in and around the beach area and we remain committed to doing all that we can to support the process, until the water quality matches our aspirations.

**C20/24      To receive any Declarations of Interest**

Councillor A Newman declared a personal interest in Item 5 Motion 1 as his children attended a school in question and indicated that he would leave the meeting during consideration of this item.

**C21/24      Minutes of the meeting held on 16 May 2024**

It was resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 May 2024 be taken as read, confirmed and signed by the Chair.

**C22/24 Motion 1: Support for Structural Issues in Schools**

(Councillor A Newman left the room.)

(During the discussion of this Motion, Councillor Bones moved a Motion without Notice, seconded by Councillor J Bartoli, for members to briefly adjourn so that an issue in the public gallery could be resolved. The meeting was adjourned for 13 minutes.)

**It was moved by Councillor L Bones, and seconded by Councillor D Lilly that:**

Council notes with concern the news of structural issues unrelated to RAAC at four local schools, and specifically the significant financial impact this issue will have on the Council's budget without central government support.

Council wishes to express its gratitude to Council officers who have reacted quickly and worked diligently to ensure disruption to teaching has been minimised.

Council asks the Mayor to write to the new Secretary of State for Education, requesting an urgent meeting to discuss the issue and explore how funding from central government can be secured to address these structural problems.

Council asks the Mayor to ensure that the cabinet member provides an update report on the situation and financial implications at each meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Co-ordination & Finance Committee until these issues are fully resolved.

**An amendment was moved by Councillor S Phillips and seconded by Councillor C Johnson as follows:**

- Alter the second paragraph insert:

'Council thanks the Mayor and Cabinet for acting swiftly to ensure children returned to face-to-face education as swiftly as possible. Council is disappointed to note that the previous Conservative led Government consistently refused to provide both temporary funding and commitments to the long-term solution.'

- In the third paragraph, replace 'Council asks the Mayor to write' with 'Council notes the mayor has already written'.

**The amended Motion therefore read:**

Council notes with concern the news of structural issues unrelated to RAAC at four local schools, and specifically the significant financial impact this issue will have on the Council's budget without central government support. Council wishes to express its gratitude to Council officers who have reacted quickly and worked diligently to ensure disruption to teaching has been minimised.

Council thanks the Mayor and Cabinet for acting swiftly to ensure children returned to face-to-face education as swiftly as possible.

Council is disappointed to note that the previous Conservative led Government consistently refused to provide both temporary funding and commitments to the long-term solution.

Council notes the Mayor has already written to the new Secretary of State for Education, requesting an urgent meeting to discuss the issue and explore how funding from central government can be secured to address these structural problems.

Council asks the Mayor to ensure that the cabinet member provides an update report on the situation and financial implications at each meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Co-ordination & Finance Committee until these issues are fully resolved.

**Votes for the Amendment:**

Councillors Linda Bell, Louise Bell, P Bunyan, B Burdis, B Clark, K Clark, S Cox, J Cruddas, E Darke, L Darke, J Day, D Drummond, P Earley, S Graham, C Gray, I Grayson, T Hallway, J Harrison, A Holdsworth, C Johnson, H Johnson, F Lott, W Lott, L Marshall, A McMullen, J Montague, J Mudzingwa, T Mulvenna, M Murphy, T Neira, K Nott, P Oliver, R O'Keefe, J O'Shea, S Phillips, B Pickard, N Redfearn, W Samuel, J Sharp, J Shaw, A Spowart, M Thirlaway, J Walker, J Webster.

**Votes against the Amendment:**

Councillors J Bartoli, L Bartoli, L Bones, J Johnsson, D Lilly, I McAlpine, O Scargill.

**The amendment was approved 42 votes to 7 votes, with 1 abstention.**

**A vote on the Substantive Motion was approved unanimously.**

(Councillor A Newman returned to the room.)

**C23/24          Motion 2: Addressing Cycling Safety Concerns in Tynemouth**

**It was moved by Councillor L Bartoli, and seconded by Councillor I McAlpine that:**

This Council notes with concern:

1. The recent evidence from London regarding the safety risks associated with floating bus stops, as reported by BBC News and the Evening Standard. Advocacy groups, including Age UK London and Disability Rights UK, have highlighted incidents where pedestrians, especially those who are blind or visually impaired, have been endangered by these designs. Safety concerns from other areas where floating bus stops have been implemented suggest a need for caution. It is imperative to ensure that such designs do not compromise the safety of our most vulnerable residents.
2. The installation of a floating bus stop in Tynemouth as part of the new cycle path initiative by the Labour-run North Tyneside Council. Given the concerns raised in other areas, it is crucial to assess the local impact thoroughly before proceeding with similar infrastructure.
3. There have also been several reports of near misses with cyclists at the newly designed junction at the top of the South Ramp to Longsands, video footage of which has been provided to officers.

This Council requests:

1. That the Mayor asks officers to look at the possibility of one of the mobile CCTV cameras which the Council already owns being relocated to the site of the new floating bus stop in Tynemouth to monitor its impact on pedestrians, cyclists, and overall safety.
2. That the Mayor asks officers to conduct a review of the junction at the top

of the South Ramp to Longsands which has already seen several near misses with cyclists and cars. Once the review is complete Council asks the Cabinet member to provide a report to the Overview & Scrutiny Co-ordination & Finance Committee.

3. That local groups, including those representing blind and visually impaired residents, be contacted for their comments and feedback on the new bus stop design. Feedback from affected local groups will provide valuable data to make informed decisions regarding future infrastructure projects.
4. That no further floating bus stops of this type be constructed until a comprehensive assessment of the current installation's impact is completed, with all findings presented to the Council for review. This ensures a cautious and well-informed approach to public transport infrastructure development, prioritising the safety and well-being of all residents.

**An amendment was proposed by Councillor H Johnson and seconded by Councillor S Graham:**

- To remove everything from 'with concern' up to and including 'vulnerable residents' from the first paragraph.
- To remove all of Point 2.
- To insert 'current installation's and all legacy floating bus stops in the area' into the first sentence of Request 4 before the word 'impact', and to insert the word 'Cabinet' into that same sentence after 'presented to...'

**The amended Motion therefore read:**

Council notes:

1. Recent reports from advocacy groups including Age UK and Disability Rights UK as well as a report from Transport for London, indicate careful attention needs to be paid while installing floating bus stops to ensure the safety of our most vulnerable residents.

2. There have also been several reports of near misses with cyclists at the newly designed junction at the top of the South Ramp to Longsands, video footage of which has been provided to officers.

This Council requests:

1. That the Mayor asks officers to look at the possibility of one of the mobile CCTV cameras which the Council already owns being relocated to the site of the new floating bus stop in Tynemouth to monitor its impact on pedestrians, cyclists, and overall safety.
2. That the Mayor asks officers to conduct a review of the junction at the top of the South Ramp to Longsands which has already seen several near misses with cyclists and cars. Once the review is complete Council asks the Cabinet member to provide a report to the Overview & Scrutiny Co-ordination & Finance Committee.
3. That local groups, including those representing blind and visually impaired residents, be contacted for their comments and feedback on the new bus stop design. Feedback from affected local groups will provide valuable data to make informed decisions regarding future infrastructure projects.
4. That no further floating bus stops of this type be constructed until a comprehensive assessment of the current installations and all legacy floating bus stops in the area impact is completed, with all findings presented to cabinet for review. This ensures a cautious and well-informed approach to public transport infrastructure development, prioritising the safety and well-being of all residents.

**A vote on the amendment was approved unanimously.**

Councillor J Wallace asked if the bus company could be contacted in order to include an announcement at such stops to users to be aware of crossing oncoming traffic, such a system exists in London.

Councillor S Graham stated that she was happy to liaise with the bus companies.

**A vote on the Substantive Motion was approved unanimously.**

**C24/24      Motion 3: Recycling Centre Appointments**

**It was moved by Councillor L Bones, and seconded by Councillor I McAlpine that:**

**Council Notes:**

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, the North Tyneside Recycling Centre transitioned to an appointment-based system to reduce busy periods and mitigate the spread of the virus.  
This system remains in place despite calls from some residents to revert to a first-come, first-serve basis.

**Council Believes:**

- Restricting access to the recycling centre and making it less convenient for some residents may increase fly-tipping rates as residents struggle to secure appointments.
- The appointment system has been beneficial for some residents, providing a more predictable and orderly process.
- However, there is a significant portion of residents that find the appointment system restrictive and inconvenient.

**Council Requests:**

1. The Mayor to work with officers to establish a hybrid system that incorporates appointments during peak hours (e.g., mornings) and a first-come, first-serve basis during off-peak hours (e.g., afternoons and weekends). This approach aims to improve accessibility for all residents and reduce fly-tipping across the borough.
2. The Mayor to explore potential funding streams for additional mobile CCTV units to be deployed at fly-tipping hotspots throughout the borough.
3. The Mayor looks at the feasibility of beginning negotiations with Newcastle City Council to give residents in the North West of North Tyneside access to Brunswick Household Waste site. Council believes this will be more convenient for residents and reduce carbon emissions by reducing the distance residents have to travel.
4. The Mayor to report back to the Council within six months on the implementation progress and effectiveness of the hybrid system and progress on securing funding for new CCTV units.

**Votes for the Motion:**

Councillors J Bartoli, L Bartoli, L Bones, J Johnsson, D Lilly, I McAlpine, O Scargill, J

Wallace.

**Votes against the Motion:**

Councillors Linda Bell, Louise Bell, P Bunyan, B Burdis, B Clark, K Clark, S Cox, J Cruddas, E Darke, L Darke, J Day, D Drummond, P Earley, S Graham, C Gray, I Grayson, T Hallway, J Harrison, A Holdsworth, C Johnson, H Johnson, F Lott, W Lott, L Marshall, A McMullen, J Montague, J Mudzingwa, T Mulvenna, M Murphy, T Neira, A Newman, K Nott, P Oliver, R O'Keefe, J O'Shea, S Phillips, B Pickard, N Redfearn, W Samuel, O Scargill, J Sharp, J Shaw, A Spowart, M Thirlaway, J Walker, J Webster.

**The Motion was rejected by 46 votes to 8.**

**C25/24 Motion 4: Unadopted Roads**

**It was moved by Councillor Dr O Scargill, and seconded by Councillor J Bartoli McAlpine that:**

Forsyth Street is an unadopted road in New York, North Tyneside. It is a small street, just 84 metres long, but is in a worse condition than perhaps any road in North Tyneside. The Council have also installed warning signs to indicate how dangerous this road is. Instead of resurfacing roads in our estates, the Council chose to resurface the road in the Tyne Tunnel trading estate that cars cannot use. They've also refused to open this road up to cars to ease congestion.

Council asks the Mayor to look at possible ways to secure the full resurfacing of Forsyth Street by the end of 2024.

Council also asks the Mayor to work with the Highways team to look at opening High Flatworth to all motorists by the end of 2024 to alleviate congestion.

**Votes for the Motion:**

Councillors J Bartoli, L Bartoli, L Bones, J Johnsson, D Lilly, I McAlpine, O Scargill.

**Votes against the Motion:**

Councillors Linda Bell, Louise Bell, P Bunyan, B Burdis, B Clark, K Clark, S Cox, J



Cruddas, E Darke, L Darke, J Day, D Drummond, P Earley, S Graham, C Gray, I Grayson, T Hallway, J Harrison, A Holdsworth, C Johnson, H Johnson, F Lott, W Lott, L Marshall, A McMullen, J Montague, J Mudzingwa, T Mulvenna, M Murphy, T Neira, A Newman, K Nott, P Oliver, R O'Keefe, J O'Shea, S Phillips, B Pickard, N Redfearn, W Samuel, O Scargill, J Sharp, J Shaw, A Spowart, M Thirlaway, J Walker, J Webster.

**The Motion was rejected by 46 votes to 7, with 1 abstention.**

**C26/24      Motion 5: Request a Financial Stability Report**

**It was moved by Councillor L Bartoli, and seconded by Councillor Dr O Scargill that:**

This Council notes with concern the recent low ranking in the financial section of the Office for Local Government (Oflog) report, which placed North Tyneside at 302nd out of 317 councils in finance and 235th overall as reported in the Times on 30 April 2024. As representatives of our community, it is imperative that we ensure transparency and financial robustness to maintain the trust and confidence of our residents.

Ministers set up Oflog last summer to provide "authoritative and accessible" performance data to support improvement in local government. Oflog measures councils across 27 categories in five main areas: waste management, corporate and finance, adult social care, planning, and roads.

Therefore, this Council resolves to request a report from the S.151 Officer addressing the following points:

- An analysis of the reasons behind North Tyneside's low financial ranking in the recent Oflog report, including a comparison with similarly sized councils and identification of specific areas where our financial performance falls short.
- An outline of the current measures in place to ensure the financial stability and sustainability of North Tyneside Council, as well as the steps being taken to improve financial management and efficiency within the council's operations.
- An assessment of potential financial risks and how they are being mitigated, alongside long-term financial strategies and plans to prevent

future declines in financial performance.

- Information on any external support or audits the council is receiving or planning to ensure financial best practices, along with outcomes of recent audits and steps taken in response to audit recommendations, should be included.

The requested report should be presented at the next Council meeting for questions and discussion.

The low financial ranking has raised concerns among residents and councillors about the financial health of North Tyneside Council. This report will provide a clear understanding of the underlying issues, highlight the steps being taken to address them, and ensure that the Council is on a path to financial robustness and stability.

By approving this motion, North Tyneside Council demonstrates its commitment to transparency, financial responsibility, and the wellbeing of its residents. We must work collectively to address the challenges and reassure our community of our financial health and stability.

**An amendment was proposed by Councillor A McMullen and seconded by Councillor C Johnson:**

To remove the phrase 'with concern' from the first paragraph.

To remove the second paragraph completely.

To add the following after the first paragraph

'Council notes the conservative leader of Northumberland County council has recently said the OFLOG league table was fundamentally flawed and every political group at the Local Government Association recently criticised the methodology and the indicators used in the rankings.

Council notes the biggest factor in the financial sustainability of the council is the £470m we have had removed from our budget since 2013 by the previous Conservative Government.

Council notes the Mayor and Labour group have never hidden away from taking the difficult decisions to ensure the financial sustainability of the council, meanwhile the Conservative opposition have either not bothered to present a

budget, presented budgets that would in the professional opinion of the then section 151 have brought the financial sustainability of the council into question.'

To remove 'to prevent future declines in financial performance.' from the third bullet point.

To amend the setting of the requested report to 'Overview and Scrutiny meeting' rather than 'Council Meeting'.

To remove the second last paragraph completely.

**The amended motion therefore read:**

This Council notes the recent low ranking in the financial section of the Office for Local Government (Oflog) report, which placed North Tyneside at 302nd out of 317 councils in finance and 235th overall as reported in the Times on 30 April 2024. As representatives of our community, it is imperative that we ensure transparency and financial robustness to maintain the trust and confidence of our residents.

Council notes the conservative leader of Northumberland County council has recently said the OFLOG league table was fundamentally flawed, and every political Group at the Local Government Association recently criticised the methodology and the indicators used in the rankings.

Council notes the biggest factor in the financial sustainability of the council is the £470m pound we have had removed from our budget since 2013 from the previous Conservative Government.

Council notes the Mayor and Labour group have never hidden away from taking the difficult decisions to ensure the financial sustainability of the council, meanwhile the Conservative opposition have either not bothered to present a budget, presented budgets that would in the professional opinion of the then section 151 have brought the financial sustainability of the council into question.

Therefore, this Council resolves to request a report from the S.151 Officer addressing the following points:

- An analysis of the reasons behind North Tyneside's low financial ranking in the

recent Oflog report, including a comparison with similarly sized councils and identification of specific areas where our financial performance falls short.

- An outline of the current measures in place to ensure the financial stability and sustainability of North Tyneside Council, as well as the steps being taken to improve financial management and efficiency within the council's operations.
- An assessment of potential financial risks and how they are being mitigated, alongside long-term financial strategies and plans.
- Information on any external support or audits the council is receiving or planning to ensure financial best practices, along with outcomes of recent audits and steps taken in response to audit recommendations, should be included.

The requested report should be presented at the next Overview and Scrutiny meeting for questions and discussion.

By approving this motion, North Tyneside Council demonstrates its commitment to transparency, financial responsibility, and the wellbeing of its residents. We must work collectively to address the challenges and reassure our community of our financial health and stability.

**Votes for the Amendment:**

Councillors Linda Bell, Louise Bell, P Bunyan, B Burdis, B Clark, K Clark, S Cox, J Cruddas, E Darke, L Darke, J Day, D Drummond, P Earley, S Graham, C Gray, I Grayson, T Hallway, J Harrison, A Holdsworth, C Johnson, H Johnson, F Lott, W Lott, L Marshall, A McMullen, J Montague, J Mudzingwa, T Mulvenna, M Murphy, T Neira, A Newman, K Nott, P Oliver, R O'Keefe, J O'Shea, S Phillips, B Pickard, N Redfearn, W Samuel, J Sharp, J Shaw, A Spowart, M Thirlaway, J Walker, J Webster.

**Votes against the Amendment:**

Councillors J Bartoli, L Bartoli, L Bones, J Johnsson, D Lilly, I McAlpine, O Scargill, J Wallace.

The amendment was approved 46 votes to 8 votes.

**Votes for the Substantive Motion**

Councillors Linda Bell, Louise Bell, P Bunyan, B Burdis, B Clark, K Clark, S Cox, J Cruddas, E Darke, L Darke, J Day, D Drummond, P Earley, S Graham, C Gray, I Grayson, T Hallway, J Harrison, A Holdsworth, C Johnson, H Johnson, F Lott, W Lott, L Marshall, A McMullen, J Montague, J Mudzingwa, T Mulvenna, M Murphy, T Neira, A Newman, K Nott, P Oliver, R O'Keefe, J O'Shea, S Phillips, B Pickard, N Redfearn, W Samuel, J Sharp, J Shaw, A Spowart, M Thirlaway, J Walker, J Webster.

**Votes against the Substantive Motion:**

Councillors J Bartoli, L Bartoli, L Bones, J Johnsson, D Lilly, I McAlpine, O Scargill, J Wallace.

**The Motion was approved by 46 votes to 8.**

**C27/24 Chair's Announcements**

The Chair made the following announcements:

The Chair discussed his previous invitation to Group leaders and Councillor Wallace, to meet and discuss behaviour in future Council meetings. He was pleased to announce that the meeting had been a success and very productive, and future meetings would be taking place. Both this and future Council agendas would be including Guidance Notes on Rules of procedure for reference.

Since the last meeting he had attended several events and presentations in the borough, including North Tyneside's 2 Matters (a nursery training provision) and noted that he was inspired and pleased at the level of the training and interest in such programmes in North Tyneside.

**C28/24 Elected Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor highlighted that the North Shields Transport Hub had recently won a Low Carbon Project of the Year award, and thanked officers for their input and support. The Hub has also been shortlisted for two more awards, which will be announced in September.

The Council was also recognised for Affordable Housing developments with the Residential Project of the Year Award for Falmouth Close in North Shields and an Innovation In Housing Award for Bellshill Close in Wallsend.

## **C29/24      Questions by Members of the Council**

### **1.    Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor A Newman**

Would the Elected Mayor give us an update on the progress made with the veterans walk way which is planned to be installed near Spanish City in Whitley Bay?

*Councillor C Johnson responded as follows:*

The Authority has been working closely with the National Veteran Walk charity to secure the installation of a veteran's walkway around the Cenotaph at the Links, in Whitley Bay.

We have assisted with the design of the walkway, and we are now working with the Charity to promote the walkway which will be a lasting tribute to proud service.

Orders are now being taken for the granite plaques, as a lasting tribute to proud service.

The names of those dedicated are also added to the National Veterans' Walk Roll of Honour. It will be a wonderful tribute, not only to those servicemen and women who have passed away, but to military personnel who continue to sacrifice so much for their country.

### **2.    Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor M Thirlaway**

Would the Elected Mayor tell us how much funding North Tyneside Council has lost, since she was first elected in 2013, due to cuts to local government imposed on us by the Conservative Party while in power?

*Councillor C Johnson responded as follows:*

Given changes in the way funding has been provided to local government over the past decade it is hard to give an exact figure, but hopefully I can give a flavour of the changes that have been experienced by the Council.

In 2013, the Authority had a revenue budget of £177m, compared to £196m in 2024. However, in 2024 prices, the 2013 budget would have been over £240m representing a reduction of £44m in the current financial year alone – and that is before the increased demands on council services.

Over that period, the sector has seen a shift towards funding coming from local sources, notably through council tax. Since 2013, following Government assumptions, the amount of our overall funding that comes from council tax has increased from 40% to 64% in 2024.

The main source of funding from central Government is Revenue Support Grant (RSG), which has reduced from £63m in 2013 to £14m in 2024, a reduction of £49m or 78%. Had the 2013 levels of RSG been maintained at the same level in cash terms, the Authority would have received an additional £470m of central Government funding over the period since 2013.

### **3. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor C Johnson**

North Tyneside Council has a proud track record of supporting our armed forces and veterans. Some local authorities take into account military compensation payments when working out benefit entitlement. Would the Elected Mayor confirm what the position is in North Tyneside?

*Councillor C Johnson responded as follows:*

The Council is very proud of our track record in supporting our armed forces and veterans. In regard to benefit entitlements the government makes provision for the first £10.00 of income from War Disablement Pension, War Widows (Widowers) Pension and the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme to be disregarded in any housing benefit and Council Tax Support assessment. The cost of this disregard is fully reimbursed to the Council.

It is at the Council's discretion to disregard any further amount in addition to the statutory £10.00 provision from these pensions. I can confirm that the Council has used our discretion and fully disregards war related pensions and income from

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support as follows:

- War Disablement Pension
- War Widows (Widowers) Pension
- Income from Armed Forces Compensation Scheme

It is only in regard to the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants for adaptations where legislation currently does not provide for the disregard of Service Invalidity Pensions'. This appears to be because Service Invalidating Pensions (SIP) are not awarded as the result of injuries or illness sustained whilst on duty, however the Council is working to come up with a solution to this on the basis of our work around the Armed Forces Covenant and I hope officers can report back soon with a solution.

The Council is thankful to the Royal British Legion for highlighting this issue through their campaigning. Thankfully no veteran in North Tyneside has been impacted by this and we are sure a solution can be found.