

# Local Government Act 1972

## Borough of North Tyneside

Thursday, 23 January 2025

At the meeting of the Council of the Borough of North Tyneside duly convened and held on Thursday, 23 January 2025 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 N Huscroft  | Councillor T Bailey     |
| Councillor L Bartoli   | Councillor J Bartoli    |
| Councillor Linda Bell  | Councillor L Bones      |
| Councillor Louise Bell | Councillor P Bunyan     |
| Councillor B Burdis    | Councillor B Clark      |
| Councillor K Clark     | Councillor J Cruddas    |
| Councillor E Darke     | Councillor L Darke      |
| Councillor J 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 J Hunter    | Councillor C Johnson    |
| Councillor H Johnson   | Councillor J Johnsson   |
| Councillor J Kirwin    | Councillor D Lilly      |
| Councillor F Lott      | Councillor W Lott       |
| Councillor L Marshall  | Councillor I McAlpine   |
| Councillor C McGinty   | Councillor A McMullen   |
| Councillor J Montague  | Councillor J Mudzingwa  |
| Councillor T Mulvenna  | Councillor M Murphy     |
| Councillor A Newman    | Councillor K Nott       |
| Councillor J O'Shea    | Councillor S Phillips   |

Councillor B Pickard  
Councillor O Scargill  
Councillor J Shaw  
Councillor J Walker

Councillor W Samuel  
Councillor J Sharp  
Councillor A Spowart  
Councillor J Webster

**Apologies:** Councillor S Burtenshaw, Councillor L McMullen, Councillor T Neira, Councillor P Oliver, Councillor R O'Keefe, Councillor M Thirlaway, Councillor J Wallace and Rev M Vine

## C61/24      Public Questions

### 1. Question from R Smithson of Whitley Bay

According to the "State of Nature" report published in 2024 the UK has suffered alarming reductions in biodiversity in recent decades but the Environment Act of 2021 established the principle of "Net Biodiversity Gain" by which all new developments since February 2024 are now required to demonstrate a 10% increase in biodiversity following completion. If a developer cannot achieve the necessary increase in biodiversity required they can buy "biodiversity credits" instead which are used to fund projects anywhere in the country.

Is North Tyneside Council confident that current levels of biodiversity within the Borough can be maintained or will our wildlife be effectively moved elsewhere with our ever increasing levels of urbanisation?

**Councillor S Graham replied as follows:**

As you have explained in your question, the Environment Act requires all developments to meet the statutory 10% biodiversity net gain. This can be delivered on-site or off-site, or a combination of both.

Developers must follow the 'Mitigation Hierarchy' and adhere to statutory guidance provided by the Government when setting out their net gain requirements. They are also required to follow the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy which very much emphasises prioritising on-site measures before exploring off-site options.

The Environment Act (2021) also requires Local Nature Recovery Strategies to be produced by Responsible Authorities across the country to assist with nature recovery. The emerging North of Tyne Local Nature Recovery Strategy will set out priorities for nature recovery and help identify locations for net gain delivery in the future, as well as nature recovery projects.

We are confident, that through these measures, along with existing wildlife protections that are addressed through the planning system, that biodiversity will continue to thrive in North Tyneside.

**R Smithson asked the following supplementary question:**

How closely will the amount of off-site spending credit be monitored and will the results of the off-site spending be published?

**Councillor S Graham replied as follows:**

Developers are required to follow the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy which is distinct from, but complementary, to the Mitigation Hierarchy referenced. This Hierarchy emphasizes on-site measures before exploring off-site options and this is to ensure that developments make the most effective contributions to the areas. Local biodiversity and developers must demonstrate how they followed this Hierarchy. Furthermore, off-site net gain measures located further away from the development site hold less net gain value. This is designed to encourage developers to ensure their projects contribute positively to local biodiversity and the government's statutory credit scheme is purposely cost prohibitive to ensure that it is the very last resort for any development. In addition, it's important to note that biodiversity net gain does not replace existing Wildlife legislation or local plan policies that currently protect a range of important habitats and species. Landscape and habitat mitigation is secured for any development that impacts habitats or species protected under the law and to address planning policy requirements.

## **2. Question from A Stenning, North Shields**

North Tyneside Council recently completed renovations to Northumberland Square and Howard Street, North Shields, with support and co-funding from Historic England. In the council's reporting of the completed work, they noted

“Howard Street offers a shared highway surface for occasional vehicle use, creating a new pedestrian and cyclist-friendly cultural scene, giving a nod to the original historic footway geometry” and underlined the use of “traditional sandstone paving”. The council celebrated that these renovations were “highly commended at a prestigious engineering awards ceremony”.

The redesigned street includes a designated ‘loading zone’ but, according to the signs installed on the street, is otherwise a ‘pedestrian and cycle zone’ with no access or parking at any time, except for loading. This was confirmed in Traffic Movements Variation Order No 1 2022 and by changes to On-Street parking regulations.

Since the completion of the renovations, increasing numbers of drivers have ignored the restrictions, both driving down Howard Street for reasons other than loading and parking on the pavements and loading bay for extended periods. At 13.15 on January 9 2025, for example, 24 cars were parked on the street. Not only does this flout traffic and parking restrictions, but it significantly limits the amenity value for pedestrians, for whom the space was explicitly designed, and damages the expensive renovations – there is extensive evidence of tyre marks and oil stains on the sandstone paving.

In this light, I ask the mayor and her cabinet:

1. Why the parking and access restrictions on Howard Street are not being enforced?
2. What steps the council will take to ensure that it has the powers and the capacity to enforce existing restrictions, so that the valued restoration of Howard Street meets the needs of those for whom it was designed (pedestrians and cyclists)?

**Councillor Hannah Johnson replied as follows:**

As part of our Ambition for North Shields, we have delivered a range of public realm improvements in Howard Street, which have complemented the restoration of Northumberland Square and helped to create a welcoming space for people walking, wheeling and cycling in the area.

Owing to the historic nature of the area, care was taken to minimise the visual impact which could have resulted if excessive signage or road markings had

been used. This is in line with good practice for schemes in designated conservation areas which seek to preserve and enhance their character.

However, we know that some vehicles that are not being used for loading, have been parking in the area. This would suggest that it might be associated with businesses in the area.

We have written to local businesses about this to ask for their co-operation and following this it is intended to start to undertake enforcement of the loading bays with effect from the week commencing 27 January.

**A Stenning asked the following supplementary question:**

How will the enforcement, which is due to begin next week, be monitored and will it be communicated to members of the public?

**Councillor H Johnson replied as follows:**

Our officers will be walking around enforcing restrictions from next week, and when it comes to any cars that might not be parked up and falling under moving traffic offences that will be down to the police. So, we're working with them to make sure that this situation doesn't happen.

### **3. Question from C Kirkham, Shiremoor**

As a grandparent I'm concerned about the lack of play spaces in Shiremoor that I can safely walk to with my 8 year old grandson. Access to playgrounds is essential for children's physical and mental health, and for the wellbeing of parents, carers and the wider community, as a recent parliamentary debate underlined.

The council's play strategy (2020-2030) states that "Equipped children's play space should be created within a safe and easy walking distance, minimising the need to cross roads and other significant barriers."

It also notes that weekly recorded inspections of play sites are carried out to "examine the equipment's basic condition, any faults from vandalism, breakages and cleanliness of the play area." My nearest play space is Moorside Play Area but I have to cross the, sometimes very busy, Station Road to access it. There

used to be a crossing outside 'Pryce Right' but it's been decommissioned. Moreover, Moorside Play Area does not always appear to be maintained and there is often rubbish including broken glass. My question is – what is the council position on creating and maintaining play spaces in the ward?

**Councillor H Johnson replied as follows:**

We know how important play sites are for the wellbeing of children and families and there are 55 play sites across North Tyneside where we continue to invest in new equipment.

We have a team dedicated to looking after our play sites and all are inspected at least once a week and litter removed as part of these visits. In addition, all play sites display a contact number where people can report any issues between visits.

In Shiremoor ward, we have five play sites including the award winning and unique Shiremoor Adventure Playground.

I know that the Moorside play site has had some unprecedented vandalism, which has meant that we have had to temporarily remove or decommission some of the kit. However, I am pleased to say that there are plans to replace the damaged equipment. This is part of an investment of over £130,000 on play equipment in the Shiremoor area over the next twelve months, including the provision of a brand-new toddlers play area at the adventure playground.

**C Kirkham asked the following supplementary question:**

I've spoken to other parents and grandparents about this and people who live in some of the newer developments in the area such as Cloverfield and the Hastings Drive estate have even further to travel than me, they also have busy roads to cross to access Play spaces. Are there any plans to update the play spaces available where new housing is built?

**Councillor H Johnson replied as follows:**

There are obviously a number of play areas in Shiremoor already, particularly when it comes to the Shiremoor Adventure Playground – it's completely unique, not just within our borough, but within the North East as well. I wouldn't

necessarily think that people in Shiremoor are not catered for when it came to playground equipment and we're also again investing in the equipment, particularly at Moorside that might have been damaged, so we are investing in our existing play areas as well.

#### **4. Question from C Davis, North Shields**

Now that a decision has been agreed by Council to close Monkseaton High School, what are the future plans for the building. Is it to be repurposed into a community asset or is to be demolished and sold off for housing? If the latter is the case, could the school be bought as a community purchase.

#### **Councillor C Johnson replied as follows:**

The school building and land is not owned by the Authority. Whilst we remain responsible for the upkeep of the building, it is currently in the ownership of the North Tyneside Learning Trust.

We are working with the school leadership team and the Learning Trust on future options. Whilst I can't confirm what the future use would be, I can assure you that there are no plans for further housing development on that site.

#### **C Davis asked the following supplementary question:**

There is a responsibility from the Council for children with SEN and Education plans that have a named school, and if that named school happens to be Monkseaton High what will be happening with those children?

#### **Councillor C Johnson replied as follows:**

We are working directly with the parent of every child that has Monkseaton as named school to get a new named school for all of them.

#### **5. Question from H Smith, Resident of Tynemouth**

A decision was reached at a public inquiry in May 2023 that the Borough Road bridge be maintained as a public right of way. Prior to this the council said it would cost too much to repair. In light of the decision of the public inquiry, has funding been allotted from the budget to ensure that repair works will commence

soon.

**Councillor H Johnson replied as follows:**

Following the public inquiry decision in 2022 to maintain a public right of way, a further assessment of the bridge structure was undertaken. This identified a series of repairs to deal with some immediate maintenance issues. This work is currently being priced and we expect it to be undertaken within the next three months.

In tandem with this our engineers are currently looking at options for larger scale repairs required to extend the life of the structure.

**H Smith asked the following supplementary question:**

What amount has been allocated and agreed in the budget, both in the short and long term?

**Councillor H Johnson replied as follows:**

The work is currently being priced and we'd expect it to be undertaken in the next three months.

**6. Question from Mr Hill, Forest Hall**

North Tyneside College has applied for planning permission to demolish part of its building. It has said it that three floors in the building due for demolition are not being used anyway. This is worrying as it appears that North Tyneside College is being run down. The reasons given are low birth rates but the college used to run very successful adult education courses as well. This combined with the closure of Monkseaton High school and its sixth form this appears to be a worrying trend for sixth form and adult education provision. What are the plans and timeline for ensuring North Tyneside maintains a sixth form provision and access to lifelong learning?

**Councillor Phillips replied as follows:**

Young people in North Tyneside currently have access to a broad provision for post 16 education and learning. This is locally through the 7 schools that have



Sixth Forms and also through access to further education settings, including locally at Tynemet College for a wide variety of vocational courses.

In January 2023, following changes to the A Level offer by Tynemet College, Cabinet reviewed the provision of school based Post 16 education in North Shields and agreed to support work with the Pele Academy Trust for the development of a school-led sixth form based at John Spence Community High School. This work is ongoing.

The adult education provision across the borough is also strong including Authority's own Ofsted rated Outstanding Adult Learning Service which offers a comprehensive range of adult skills programmes. These are designed in collaboration with local employers to deliver against local skills improvement plans.

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

Due to the role of the combined Authority and the new Mayor, does that provide more opportunities for coordinating on a wider basis than just North Tyneside Council?

**Councillor Phillips replied as follows:**

Yes, this will mean more opportunities for collaboration, we just need to be really careful that in any kind of new scheme going ahead that it has to go through the very stringent DFE conditions.

#### **C62/24      To receive any Declarations of Interest**

The Monitoring officer advised members in relation a number of inquiries regarding C68/24 Motion 5: Reviewing the Impact Assessment of Grant Funding to Voluntary, Community, and Social Organisations (VSCOs) and Community Interest Companies (CICs).

Where the majority of a VSCO and CICs funding comes from the council and a Member, or a close associate of that member, benefits financially through their employment by that organisation, Members have been advised to declare an Interest and leave the meeting for the duration of the discussion for that item.

Other voluntary groups or organisations which appear in the Member's Register of Interest who do not receive funding from the Council do not need to be declared.

The Monitoring officer also advised Members on C66/24 Motion 3, saying that while members should declare any interest in relation to the Motion's content, they did not regard the likely interest as being significant enough to warrant leaving the room for the duration of the item.

**Item C68/24 Motion 3 - Compensation for 1950s born women affected by changes in the State Pension Age ("WASPI" women)**

The following Councillors declared the interests shown below:

Councillor Nigel Huscroft, Personal, Married to potentially eligible WASPI woman..

Councillor David Lilly, Personal, Married to potentially eligible WASPI woman.

Councillor Bruce Pickard, Personal, Married to potentially eligible WASPI woman.

**Item C68/24 Motion 5 - Reviewing the Impact Assessment of Grant Funding to Voluntary, Community, and Social Organisations (VSCOs) and Community Interest Companies (CICs)**

The following Councillors declared the interests shown below:

Councillor Paul Bunyan, Registerable Personal, Trustee of Burradon Juniors Football Club.

Councillor Bryan Clark, Registerable Personal, Related to Employee of Justice Prince CIC.

Councillor Karen Clark, Registerable Personal, Unpaid Director and Employee of Justice Prince CIC.

Councillor Julie Cruddas, Registerable Personal, Unpaid Director and Employee of Justice Prince CIC.

Councillor Davey Drummond, Registerable Personal, Trustee of CAB.

Councillor Eddie Darke, Registerable Personal, Director of Northumbria Youth Action.

Councillor Peter Earley, Registerable Personal, Trustee of North Tyneside Carers Centre.

Councillor Andy Holdsworth, Registerable Personal, Employed by a charity addressing Homelessness.

Councillor Janet Hunter, Registerable Personal, Trustee of Basement Project at St Barts.

Councillor Anthony McMullen, Registerable Personal, Position of management at a Charity.

Councillor Josephine Mudzingwa, Registerable Personal, Works with the Culture & Diversity African Group.

Councillor Joanne Sharp, Registerable Personal, Board Member of CAB North Tyneside.

**Item C70/24 Questions by Members of the Council.**

The following Councillors declared the interests shown below:

Councillor Karen Clark, Registerable Personal, Question 5 – Unpaid Director and Employee of Justice Prince.

Councillor Julie Cruddas, Registerable Personal, Question 5 – Unpaid Director and Employee of Justice Prince.

2025

Councillor Lilly asked that it be noted that he did vote in support of the Substantive Motion for C55/24 on 21 November 2024.

It was resolved that the minutes of the previous two meetings held on 21 November 2024 and the meeting on 6 January 2025 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

**C64/24      Motion 1 – The Jay Report Recommendations on Grooming Gangs**

**It was moved by Councillor Dr O Scargill and seconded by Councillor D Lilly, who reserved the right to speak, that:**

This Council endorses the request of colleagues at Oldham Council in their call for a national inquiry into rape gangs and believes it is inappropriate for government ministers to expect local Councils to conduct inquiries of such importance or to be able to appropriately resource them, especially under the current legislation which means any such inquiry would be unable to compel witnesses to give evidence.

Council notes the recent comments of Professor Alexis Jay, chair of the Child Sexual Abuse inquiry established by the Conservative government in 2016, who has said of her review recommendations that “locally people need to step up to the mark and do the things that have been recommended”.

Council therefore agrees to meet this challenge and asks the Mayor to implement all of the Jay Review recommendations that can practicably be adopted locally. The acting Chief Executive should be the named responsible person for their implementation. This should include as a minimum:

- Exploring and implementing ways to make employees aware of the need to report safeguarding concerns to the authority in their roles and private lives.
- Ensuring that all employee contracts are explicit in the requirement for us all to report child sexual exploitation.
- Considering how a mandatory reporting clause can be embedded into Council contracts through procurement processes so that all Council

contractors or grant recipients must agree to a mandatory reporting statement.

- An ongoing public communications plan on the best ways to report child sexual exploitation.

Council also asks the Mayor to write to the Prime Minister and the Minister for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls to join cross-party calls for a time limited national inquiry into rape gangs.

**An amendment was moved by Councillor P Earley and seconded by Councillor C Johnson as follows:**

Remove the remainder of the first paragraph after the word "gangs".

Insert the following text after the second paragraph "The last Conservative government issued an "awful, inconsequential, insubstantial response" in failing to implement the Jay Review findings according to the Professor Alexis Jay chair of the Independent enquiry into Sexual Abuse.

Council notes the current Labour Government are getting on with the job of implementing the recommendations in the Jay Report

In November 2024 the local authorities' children services were inspected by Ofsted who examined our arrangements in relation to missing and those who experience exploitation. The report recently published (on the 13th January) found our arrangements to be robust, and as a result children were safer because of the work the service is doing. North Tyneside Children's services were found to be outstanding in all areas.

North Tyneside Council is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, and adults at risk of harm. All staff and volunteers are expected to share this commitment and to familiarise themselves with all relevant policies, procedures, and guidance. Within North Tyneside, safeguarding is everybody's business. This expectation is written into all job adverts, and all Council job profiles. In addition, as part of the welcome day staff attend when they join the organisation, this expectation is re-enforced with a section of the day dedicated to everyone's roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding."

Remove the phrase "Exploring and implementing ways" from the first bullet point.

**The amended Motion therefore read:**

This Council endorses the request of colleagues at Oldham Council in their call for a national inquiry into rape gangs.

Council notes the recent comments of Professor Alexis Jay, chair of the Child Sexual Abuse inquiry established by the Conservative government in 2016, who has said of her review recommendations that "locally people need to step up to the mark and do the things that have been recommended".

The last Conservative government issued an "awful, inconsequential, insubstantial response" in failing to implement the Jay Review findings according to the Professor Alexis Jay chair of the Independent enquiry into Sexual Abuse.

Council notes the current Labour Government are getting on with the job of implementing the recommendations in the Jay Report

In November 2024 the local authorities' children services were inspected by Ofsted who examined our arrangements in relation to missing and those who experience exploitation. The report recently published (on the 13th January) found our arrangements to be robust, and as a result children were safer because of the work the service is doing. North Tyneside Children's services were found to be outstanding in all areas.

North Tyneside Council is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, and adults at risk of harm. All staff and volunteers are expected to share this commitment and to familiarise themselves with all relevant policies, procedures, and guidance. Within North Tyneside, safeguarding is everybody's business. This expectation is written into all job adverts, and all Council job profiles. In addition, as part of the welcome day staff attend when they join the organisation, this expectation is re-enforced with a section of the day dedicated to everyone's roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding.

Council therefore agrees to meet this challenge and asks the Mayor to implement all of the Jay Review recommendations that can practicably be adopted locally. The acting Chief Executive should be the named responsible person for their implementation.

This should include as a minimum:

- Continue to make employees aware of the need to report safeguarding concerns to the authority in their roles and private lives.
- Exploring Ensuring that all employee contracts are explicit in the requirement for us all to report child sexual exploitation.
- Considering how a mandatory reporting clause can be embedded into Council contracts through procurement processes so that all Council contractors or grant recipients must agree to a mandatory reporting statement.
- An ongoing public communications plan on the best ways to report child sexual exploitation.

Council also asks the Mayor to write to the Prime Minister and the Minister for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls to join cross-party calls for a time limited national inquiry into rape gangs.

#### **Votes for the Amendment:**

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

#### **Votes against the Amendment:**

Councillors J Bartoli, L Bartoli, L Bones, J Johnsson, D Lilly, I McAlpine, C McGinty and Dr O Scargill.

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

**The Substantive Motion was approved unanimously by 54 votes.**

**C65/24      Motion 2 – Fairness in Social Housing Allocation**

(Councillor L Bartoli left the meeting at 18:48, and did not return)

**It was moved by Councillor L Bones, and seconded by Councillor J Bartoli, who reserved the right to speak, that:**

This Council Notes:

- The demand for social housing in North Tyneside has grown significantly, with the Homefinder service now receiving an average of 50 applications per day compared to 20 applications five years ago.
- The previous Conservative Government’s plan to prioritise British nationals and long-term residents in council housing allocations was intended to ensure fairness and restore public confidence in the allocation process.
- The current Labour Government has chosen to abandon this policy, removing the “UK connection test” – a decision that risks further undermining trust in the social housing system and failing to address the concerns of our communities.

Council Believes:

- British nationals and long-term residents who have contributed to the system deserve to be prioritised in social housing allocations.
- The Labour Government’s decision to scrap plans for prioritising British nationals demonstrates a lack of understanding of the concerns faced by residents across North Tyneside who are waiting for social housing allocations.
- A fair, transparent housing allocation system that prioritises those with strong local connections is essential to maintain public trust and community cohesion.

Council Resolves:



To request that the Elected Mayor of North Tyneside write to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to:

- Express this council's disappointment in the Labour Government's decision to abandon the "UK connection test" and plans to prioritise British nationals and long-term residents in social housing allocations.
- Call on the Government to urgently reconsider this decision and introduce measures to ensure British nationals and long-term residents are given appropriate prioritisation in housing allocation policies.

**An amendment was moved by Councillor J Harrison and seconded by Councillor A Newman as follows:**

Insert the following text after the second bullet point

- North Tyneside Council Lettings Policy gives priority for housing applications to those with a local connection to the borough and did so long before the previous government introduced the measures.
- The right to rent test means applicants must prove they are eligible to rent housing include immigration status and nationality.
- North Tyneside also has a long tradition of welcoming households who have been at risk of or subjected to actual violence and persecution in their home countries. Several Government funded schemes support the relocation of refugees and asylum seekers. Each scheme has its own criteria, including housing and support arrangements.
- The "UK connection test" has little to no discernible policy impact and that eligibility criteria for social housing is already tightly defined, Migrants arriving in the UK on student or work visas, as well as those arriving in the country illegally with no leave to remain, will remain ineligible for an allocation of social housing, as they are now."

Remove the third and fifth bullet point.

Replace "A fair" with "North Tyneside has a fair" on the sixth bullet point.

Insert the following bullet points after the sixth bullet point.

“North Tyneside Council reaffirms its commitment to refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine and the brutal Taliban regime in Afghanistan, particularly those who served alongside the British Armed Forces.

The Mayor and Labour Groups plan to build 5000 affordable homes is essential satisfying the demand for homes in the borough.”

Insert the following bullet point after “Council Resolves:”

To request that the Elected Mayor of North Tyneside write all members to remind them of the local connections test which currently exists in North Tyneside Councils lettings policy.

Delete the seventh bullet point.

Amend the eighth bullet point by replacing the text “urgently reconsider this decision and introduce” with the word “clarify”.

**The amended Motion therefore read:**

This Council Notes:

- The demand for social housing in North Tyneside has grown significantly, with the Homefinder service now receiving an average of 50 applications per day compared to 20 applications five years ago.
- The previous Conservative Government’s plan to prioritise British nationals and long-term residents in council housing allocations was intended to ensure fairness and restore public confidence in the allocation process.
- North Tyneside Council Lettings Policy gives priority for housing applications to those with a local connection to the borough and did so long before the previous government introduced the measures.
- The right to rent test means applicants must prove they are eligible to rent housing include immigration status and nationality.

- North Tyneside also has a long tradition of welcoming households who have been at risk of or subjected to actual violence and persecution in their home countries. Several Government funded schemes support the relocation of refugees and asylum seekers. Each scheme has its own criteria, including housing and support arrangements.
- The “UK connection test” has little to no discernible policy impact and that eligibility criteria for social housing is already tightly defined, Migrants arriving in the UK on student or work visas, as well as those arriving in the country illegally with no leave to remain, will remain ineligible for an allocation of social housing, as they are now.

Council Believes:

- British nationals and long-term residents who have contributed to the system deserve to be prioritised in social housing allocations.
- 
- North Tyneside Council has a fair transparent housing allocation system that prioritises those with strong local connections that is essential to maintain public trust and community cohesion.
- North Tyneside Council reaffirms its commitment to refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine and the brutal Taliban regime in Afghanistan, particularly those who served alongside the British Armed Forces.
- The Mayor and Labour Groups plan to build 5000 affordable homes is essential satisfying the demand for homes in the borough.

Council Resolves:

To request that the Elected Mayor of North Tyneside write all members to remind them of the local connections test which currently exists in North Tyneside Councils lettings policy.

To request that the Elected Mayor of North Tyneside write to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to:

- Call on the Government to clarify that measures to ensure British nationals and long-term residents are given appropriate prioritisation in housing are

already in place.

**Votes for the Amendment:**

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

**Votes against the Amendment:**

Councillors J Bartoli, L Bones, J Johnsson, D Lilly, I McAlpine, C McGinty and Dr O Scargill.

**The amendment was approved by 46 votes to 7 votes against.**

**Votes for the Substantive Motion:**

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

**Abstentions:**

Councillors J Bartoli, L Bones, J Johnsson, D Lilly, I McAlpine, C McGinty and Dr O Scargill.

**The Substantive Motion was approved by 46 votes with 7 abstentions.**

## changes in the State Pension Age ("WASPI" women)

(Councillor C Gray left the meeting)

It was moved by Councillor McAlpine and seconded by Councillor L Bones, who reserved the right to speak, that:

In March 2024, the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman made a landmark ruling calling for a one-off compensation payment to women born in the 1950s who were impacted by changes to the state pension age.

The report upholds the view of the Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI) campaign that the change in State Pension age from 60 to 65 (subsequently raised to 66) was not properly communicated. This left many financially unprepared for their retirement, with little to no time make alternative arrangements.

In December 2024, the government announced it would not provide the compensation recommended by the Ombudsman.

This council has previously expressed its own view that a one-off compensation payment (as then recommended by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on State Pensions) should be offered to the women affected.

Council notes that

- The PHSO's report lays out necessary compensation measures that should be implemented by the government in full;
- A swift resolution is still needed to address this ongoing injustice, as this cohort of woman are still dying waiting for compensation;
- This injustice continues to have a profound effect on the individuals involved, and the wider community in North Tyneside and on local government and public sector finances.

Council calls upon The Elected Mayor to write to the local Members of Parliament and to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to:

- Reaffirm the council's commitment to the 1950s women, and to reiterate the effects of the injustice to upon them, their families and the communities in North Tyneside.

- Request on behalf of the residents of North Tyneside that the compensation measures laid out in the PHSOs report are implemented.

**The Motion was approved unanimously by 52 votes.**

Councillors T Bailey, J Bartoli, Linda Bell, Louise Bell, L Bones, P Bunyan, B Burdis, B Clark, K Clark, S Cox, J Cruddas, E Darke, L Darke, J Day, S Day, D Drummond, P Earley, S Graham, I Grayson, T Hallway, J Harrison, A Holdsworth, J Hunter, N Huscroft, C Johnson, H Johnson, J Johnsson, J Kirwin, D Lilly, F Lott, W Lott, L Marshall, I McAlpine, C McGinty, A McMullen, J Montague, J Mudzingwa, T Mulvenna, M Murphy, A Newman, K Nott, J O'Shea, S Phillips, B Pickard, N Redfearn, W Samuel, Dr O Scargill, J Sharp, J Shaw, A Spowart, J Walker and J Webster.

**C67/24      Motion 4 – Introduction of a single social tariff for water bills in England and Wales**

**It was moved by Councillor C McGinty and seconded by Councillor J Johnsson, who reserved the right to speak, that:**

The National Pensioners Convention (NPC) is deeply concerned about projected poverty levels following statements from the Secretary of State. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has acknowledged that up to 100,000 pensioners in England and Wales could fall into poverty because of cuts to winter fuel payments. The NPC is shocked by the government's admission.

Water bills are projected to increase by an average of 36% over the next five years, which will be a significant concern for older people who are already facing high bills.

People who are not on water meters have their water bills calculated based on the rateable value of their property. The amount of financial support someone receives for their water bill should not be influenced by the address of the property. The NPC along with other charities have written to the Minister for Water and Flooding to make a case for a single social tariff.

Council believes swift action is needed to end the unfair postcode lottery by introducing a single water social tariff which would provide fair and consistent

support for those in financial hardship.

Council calls upon the Mayor to write to the Minister for Water and Flooding, Emma Hardy, making the case for a single social tariff for England and Wales.

**An amendment was moved by Councillor W Samuel and seconded by Councillor C Johnson as follows:**

Insert the following after the fourth paragraph

“Council believes Water Companies have continued to profit millions of pounds all while bills go up and the services gets worse. It is time for Water companies to be nationalised.”

Insert the following sentence at the end of the final paragraph “As well as making the case for the Water companies to be nationalised.”

**The amended Motion therefore read:**

The National Pensioners Convention (NPC) is deeply concerned about projected poverty levels following statements from the Secretary of State. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has acknowledged that up to 100,000 pensioners in England and Wales could fall into poverty because of cuts to winter fuel payments. The NPC is shocked by the government’s admission.

Water bills are projected to increase by an average of 36% over the next five years, which will be a significant concern for older people who are already facing high bills.

People who are not on water meters have their water bills calculated based on the rateable value of their property. The amount of financial support someone receives for their water bill should not be influenced by the address of the property. The NPC along with other charities have written to the Minister for Water and Flooding to make a case for a single social tariff.

Council believes swift action is needed to end the unfair postcode lottery by introducing a single water social tariff which would provide fair and consistent support for those in financial hardship.

Council believes Water Companies have continued to profit millions of pounds all while bills go up and the services gets worse. It is time for Water companies to be nationalised.

Council calls upon the Mayor to write to the Minister for Water and Flooding, Emma Hardy, making the case for a single social tariff for England and Wales. As well as making the case for the Water companies to be nationalised.

**Votes for the Amendment:**

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

**Votes against the Amendment:**

Councillors J Bartoli, L Bones, J Johnsson, D Lilly, I McAlpine, C McGinty and Dr O Scargill.

**The amendment was approved by 45 votes to 7 votes.**

**The substantive motion was approved by 52 votes:**

Councillors T Bailey, J Bartoli, Linda Bell, Louise Bell, L Bones, P Bunyan, B Burdis, B Clark, K Clark, S Cox, J Cruddas, E Darke, L Darke, J Day, S Day, D Drummond, P Earley, S Graham, I Grayson, T Hallway, J Harrison, A Holdsworth, J Hunter, N Huscroft, C Johnson, H Johnson, J Johnsson, J Kirwin, D Lilly, F Lott, W Lott, L Marshall, I McAlpine, C McGinty, A McMullen, J Montague, J Mudzingwa, T Mulvenna, M Murphy, A Newman, K Nott, J O'Shea, S Phillips, B Pickard, N Redfearn, W Samuel, Dr O Scargill, J Sharp, J Shaw, A Spowart, J Walker and J Webster.



## Voluntary, Community, and Social Organisations (VSCOs) and Community Interest Companies (CICs)

(Councillors B Clark, K Clark, J Cruddas, D Drummond, P Earley, A Holdsworth, A McMullen, J Mudzingwa, J Sharp left the meeting)

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

Council notes:

- The importance of providing grant funding to Voluntary, Community, and Social Organisations (VSCOs) and Community Interest Companies (CICs) to deliver valuable community services and initiatives.
- The responsibility of the Council to ensure that public funds are spent effectively, transparently, and in the best interests of residents.
- Ongoing pressure within the Council's finances resulting in reducing staffing numbers within the authority.
- The recommendation of the Budget Study Group that "Cabinet considers the amount of funding provided to voluntary and community sector organisations, especially in light of the requirement to reduce directly employed staff."

Council believes:

- That grant funding must deliver measurable benefits for local residents and communities, prioritising service delivery.
- That there is a need for robust scrutiny of the financial practices of organisations receiving public funds to ensure accountability and public trust.
- That councillors should provide full transparency about any personal financial benefits derived from grant-funded organisations to avoid any conflict of interest or perception of impropriety.

Council resolves to:

Ask the Mayor to Conduct a review of its grant funding policies, with particular

focus on how the impact of grant funding to VSCOs and CICs is assessed. This review should ensure:

- Grant funding provides maximum benefit to the communities served.
- Adequate safeguards are in place to prevent disproportionate payouts to directors of CICs from public funds.
- That monitoring and reporting requirements are strengthened to ensure transparency and accountability.

Ask the Monitoring officer to review ways the Members' Declaration of Interests form could be strengthened to ensure any members benefiting financially from a VCSO or CIC which receives the majority of its funding from North Tyneside Council are transparent and easily understandable to the public.

Report back to Council within six months with both the Mayor's review and any recommendations from the Monitoring Officer for any necessary policy changes or updates based on the outcomes of the review.

**An amendment was moved by Councillor C Johnson and seconded by Councillor W Samuel, who reserved the right to speak, as follows:**

To add the following text after the fourth bullet point:

"Council further notes

- The Authority does not award contracts without compliance with Contract Standing Orders;
- The Authority does not award grants to VCSE organisations, without them first going through a competitive process.

This involves:

- Advertise a grant opportunity for organisations to apply for assessing applications against agreed criteria and by an appropriate group of experienced and independent people - ensuring value for money and suitability of the organisation/individual to meet the outcomes required by the grant.

- Awarding a grant, using one of the Authority's agreed payment mechanisms, contained within the grant funding agreement.
- Active and proportionate monitoring of grant deliverables or outcomes, ensuring the outcomes have been met.
- Any organisation awarded any form of contract or grant by the Authority, will be subject to due-diligence prior to being awarded, proportionate to the value of the grant or contract

To remove the phrase "A need for" from the sixth bullet point.

**The amended Motion therefore read:**

- The importance of providing grant funding to Voluntary, Community, and Social Organisations (VSCOs) and Community Interest Companies (CICs) to deliver valuable community services and initiatives.
- The responsibility of the Council to ensure that public funds are spent effectively, transparently, and in the best interests of residents.
- Ongoing pressure within the Council's finances resulting in reducing staffing numbers within the authority.
- The recommendation of the Budget Study Group that "Cabinet considers the amount of funding provided to voluntary and community sector organisations, especially in light of the requirement to reduce directly employed staff."

**Council further notes**

- The Authority does not award contracts without compliance with Contract Standing Orders;
- The Authority does not award grants to VCSE organisations, without them first going through a competitive process.

This involves:

- Advertise a grant opportunity for organisations to apply for assessing applications against agreed criteria and by an appropriate group of experienced and independent people – ensuring value for money and suitability of the organisation/individual to meet the outcomes required by the grant.
- Awarding a grant, using one of the Authority's agreed payment mechanisms, contained within the grant funding agreement.
- Active and proportionate monitoring of grant deliverables or outcomes, ensuring the outcomes have been met.
- Any organisation awarded any form of contract or grant by the Authority, will be subject to due-diligence prior to being awarded, proportionate to the value of the grant or contract

Council believes:

- That grant funding must deliver measurable benefits for local residents and communities, prioritising service delivery.
- That there is already robust scrutiny of the financial practices of organisations receiving public funds to ensure accountability and public trust.
- That councillors should provide full transparency about any personal financial benefits derived from grant-funded organisations to avoid any conflict of interest or perception of impropriety.

Council resolves to:

Ask the Mayor to Conduct a review of its grant funding policies, with particular focus on how the impact of grant funding to VSCOs and CICs is assessed. This review should ensure:

- Grant funding provides maximum benefit to the communities served.
- Adequate safeguards are in place to prevent disproportionate payouts to directors of CICs from public funds.

- That monitoring and reporting requirements are strengthened to ensure transparency and accountability.

Ask the Monitoring officer to review ways the Members' Declaration of Interests form could be strengthened to ensure any members benefiting financially from a VCSO or CIC which receives the majority of its funding from North Tyneside Council are transparent and easily understandable to the public.

Report back to Council within six months with both the Mayor's review and any recommendations from the Monitoring Officer for any necessary policy changes or updates based on the outcomes of the review.

**Votes for the Amendment:**

Councillors T Bailey, J Bartoli, Linda Bell, Louise Bell, L Bones, P Bunyan, B Burdis, S Cox, E Darke, L Darke, J Day, S Day, S Graham, I Grayson, T Hallway, J Harrison, J Hunter, N Huscroft, C Johnson, H Johnson, J Johnsson, J Kirwin, D Lilly, F Lott, W Lott, L Marshall, I McAlpine, C McGinty, J Montague, T Mulvenna, M Murphy, A Newman, K Nott, J O'Shea, S Phillips, B Pickard, N Redfearn, W Samuel, Dr O Scargill, J Shaw, A Spowart, J Walker and J Webster.

**The Amendment was approved by 43 votes.**

**Votes for the Substantive Motion:**

Councillors T Bailey, J Bartoli, Linda Bell, Louise Bell, L Bones, P Bunyan, B Burdis, S Cox, E Darke, L Darke, J Day, S Day, S Graham, I Grayson, T Hallway, J Harrison, J Hunter, N Huscroft, C Johnson, H Johnson, J Johnsson, J Kirwin, D Lilly, F Lott, W Lott, L Marshall, I McAlpine, C McGinty, J Montague, T Mulvenna, M Murphy, A Newman, K Nott, J O'Shea, S Phillips, B Pickard, N Redfearn, W Samuel, Dr O Scargill, J Shaw, A Spowart, J Walker and J Webster.

**The Motion was carried approved by 43 votes.**

(Councillors B Clark, K Clark, J Cruddas, D Drummond, P Earley, A Holdsworth, A McMullen, J Mudzingwa, J Sharp returned to the meeting)

**(Councillor O'Shea left the meeting)**

Council received a report which presented a draft programme of Council and Committee meetings for the 2025/26 municipal year. It also requested Council to determine which Council meetings during 2025/26 should be designated for the purposes of public question time.

It was moved by Mayor N Redfearn and seconded by Councillor C Johnson, who reserved the right to speak, that Council:

- (1) Agree the programme of meetings for 2024/25 as set out in Appendix A to the report; and
- (2) Agree that the meeting of the full Council proposed for 24 July 2025, 27 November 2025 and 29 January 2026 be those at which questions will be taken from members of the public.

**Votes for the report:**

Councillors T Bailey, J Bartoli, Linda Bell, Louise Bell, L Bones, P Bunyan, B Burdis, B Clark, K Clark, S Cox, J Cruddas, E Darke, L Darke, J Day, S Day, D Drummond, P Earley, S Graham, I Grayson, T Hallway, J Harrison, A Holdsworth, J Hunter, N Huscroft, C Johnson, H Johnson, J Johnsson, J Kirwin, D Lilly, F Lott, W Lott, L Marshall, I McAlpine, C McGinty, A McMullen, J Montague, J Mudzingwa, T Mulvenna, M Murphy, A Newman, K Nott, S Phillips, B Pickard, N Redfearn, W Samuel, Dr O Scargill, J Sharp, J Shaw, A Spowart, J Walker and J Webster.

The report was approved by 51 votes.

**(Councillor O'Shea returned to the meeting)**

**(Councillor C Gray returned to the meeting)**

**Question 1 – Councillor L Bones**

Councillor Bones informed the Chair he would be withdrawing his question in the interests of time.

**Question 2 – Councillor D Lilly**

With the confirmed closure of Monkseaton High School what criteria will be applied to allocate future pupils to their High Schools?

**Councillor S Phillips provided the following response:**

The Authority has and continues to work closely with the Headteachers of secondary and high schools in North Tyneside to ensure that capacity exists to accommodate displaced pupils from Monkseaton High School, now and in the future.

The Authority has coordinated extraordinary admissions arrangements, for current Year 9 pupils at Monkseaton High School, to identify their school place for September 2025. The Authority is also coordinating extraordinary admissions arrangements for current Year 8 pupils at a North Tyneside Middle School, for parents and carers who either did not apply for a Year 9 school place for September 2025 or included Monkseaton High School as one of their preferences. The extraordinary arrangements use the same criteria as our cabinet agreed, annual published admissions arrangements.

**Councillor D Lilly asked the following supplementary question:**

As has been confirmed upon the closure of Monkseaton High School, not all displaced pupils will be accommodated at Whitley Bay High School. Consequently, pupils who would have expected to walk to school will now have to travel the length and breadth of the borough. This will incur families unexpected travel costs and will place a burden on family finances. What assistance will be offered to these families to ameliorate this extra expense?

**Councillor S Phillips provided the following response:**

There has never been a guarantee that children living in the North East Planning Area would be able to attend a specific school in that area. Not all parents and carers living in the North East Planning Area apply for schools in that area. Where there are more applications than places, schools' oversubscription criteria will be applied

Currently, there is more capacity in each year group in the North East Planning Area than there are pupils in each year group living in that area. Subsequent to the closure of Monkseaton High School, the Council forecasts that the future structure of and capacity in the three-tier system will be more reflective of the resident pupil population living in the North East Planning Area. The same principle will be applied across the Borough, ensuring that there are sufficient places for all resident pupils to attend their local catchment school.

When we have found out what's happening on January 31 2025, we'll obviously be able to look at individual cases for affected students from those schools.

### **Question 3 – Councillor D Lilly**

Will the Mayor guarantee the future of Monkseaton Middle School in light of the Labour Cabinet's decision to close Monkseaton High School?

### **Councillor S Phillips provided the following response:**

The Authority is currently undertaking a Strategic Education Review across North Tyneside, seeking to ensure that a sustainable, sufficient and high-quality educational system is maintained which enables all children and young people to achieve positive outcomes, including those with additional needs.

Council will remember that in the Cabinet Report of September 2023, the Authority gave a firm commitment to the three-tier system in the Planning Area and to working together with the schools to ensure it is viable and sustainable.

### **Councillor D Lilly asked the following supplementary question:**

What assessment has been made of the impact on Monkseaton Middle School when parents rightly decide to send their children to the designated high schools at the beginning of Year Seven ensuring they start the new school with all other



new starters thus enabling them to form friendship groups rather than having to break into existing peer group friendships which will be much more difficult if this transfer is delayed until Year Nine?

**Councillor S Phillips provided the following response:**

Impact assessments were done in light of all schools, not just Monkseaton Middle School, so we have done impact assessments across the whole of the Northeast plan area for the Schools and we're quite confident that displaced pupils can be given a school place elsewhere in North Tyneside.

**Question 4 – Councillor Liam Bones**

Can the Mayor provide an update on the winter fuel voucher scheme, including how many people have now received vouchers, how many incorrect vouchers were issued, how many residents were unable to use the vouchers over Christmas as a result of the error and why no communications took place with local shops to explain the scheme, resulting in many not having enough cash on-site to pay out.

**Councillor K Clark provided the following response:**

I can confirm that 1486 pensioner households have been issued with winter fuel vouchers. Unfortunately of these, 299 households were issued with vouchers that had a reduced expiry date and 86 households did not redeem all of their vouchers by the expiry date. However, the other 213 households were able to cash all of their vouchers before Christmas.

Before the expiry date, the Authority realising the error, wrote to all households who had not yet cashed their vouchers and made them aware of the issue and advised that vouchers would be reissued in January with an extended expiry date.

The voucher provider contacted the local shops that use their vouchers and increased cash floats were provided by the supplier to their shops, but the Authority is aware that 10 households were unable cash all of the household vouchers.

Apologies to any pensioners who were adversely affected by this error and I will

take this opportunity to thank all the pensioners who have taken the trouble to contact me to express their thanks to North Tyneside Council for the introduction of the new scheme that has had a great impact on them.

**Councillor L Bones asked the following supplementary question:**

Given that the Cabinet member is seeking resident support to be our next Mayor, and she can't even get a simple voucher scheme right, what makes her think she's qualified to be our next Mayor?

**Councillor K Clark provided the following response:**

I think I'm absolutely fit to stand as the next Elected Mayor, I certainly was swift to act and introduce the new scheme which is providing additional support to 2800 low income pensioner households in this borough. It may be little in terms of numbers compared to the relative number of households in the whole of borough but it's not small in terms of the impact it has had on the recipients of those vouchers and all of the pensioners I have spoken to and the pensioners who have taken the trouble to contact me. It's had a big impact on their life so it's not a small insignificant scheme and if I am to be elected the next Mayor of North Tyneside then residents can rest assured supporting their needs and promoting their interests will always be central in everything I do.

**(Councillors B Clark, K Clark and J Cruddas left the meeting)**

**Question 5 – Councillor Dr Olly Scargill**

In 2019 Cabinet agreed to the freehold sale of the eastern section of the Innisfree Allotments for the sum total of £1. How much was the land estimated to be worth and how much rental income has been foregone since the sale in 2019?

**Mayor N Redfearn provided the following response:**

In June 2019 Cabinet received a report on a proposal to transfer the Authority's interest in the eastern section of Innisfree Allotments to a Community Interest Company but the transfer did not progress. The land is estimated to have a value of £13,000.

**(Councillors B Clark, K Clark and J Cruddas returned to the meeting)**

Councillors J Johnsson and F Lott asked if a review of the sound in the chamber could take place prior to the new Council meeting due to a number of members not always being able to hear correctly what other members were saying.

#### **Question 6 – Councillor J Johnsson**

At a recent meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny committee the Mayor said that water problems in Cullercoats bay, which date back to 2017, have “gone on long enough” – please can the Mayor outline why it has taken her so long to come to this conclusion and when residents can expect the water quality rating to go up?

#### **Councillor H Johnson provided the following response:**

The Authority are not responsible for water quality but we have been working alongside Northumbrian Water and the Environment Agency for some time to investigate the concerns at Cullercoats

We understand how important this issue is for the people of North Tyneside, and it is for this reason that the Elected Mayor has decided to create a Cullercoats bathing water quality task group. The purpose of the group is to bring together different stakeholders to help create a shared understanding of the issues and challenges around this situation. The group will also receive progress updates from partner organisations in relation to ongoing investigations and works to try and resolve the issue.

Up until now a huge amount of work has been undertaken to try and identify the source of contamination and to improve the sewerage network as well as fixing private home connection issues. This has included

- investigating pipework, connections and possible pollution pathways
- re-sealing gullies and capping off and re-diverting a historic water culvert
- checking connections to nearby public toilets

Actions taken by the partnership to identify the contamination source include

- DNA analysis carried out to identify likely sources of pollution where Bird, human and dog markers identified. Source apportionment not currently feasible using EA method.

- More than 100 properties checked, and around 20 misconnected pipes repaired
- 3,500m of pipe inspected with cameras and any defects fixed
- 150m of pipe coated with a special lining to prevent leaks
- Interceptor storm tunnel inspected, and no issues found
- Dual rising main from local pumping station dug down and inspected with no issues found
- Suspected 'pollution pathways' inspected using a special dye and no trace found on beach
- 80 highways gullies checked for misconnections and pipework failures
- 12 soakaways / gullies sealed to prevent foul water entering the ground
- Issues at private properties resolved
- More than 900 water samples taken from both within the bay and locations around the surrounding catchment
- Further sampling and tracing of old culverted watercourse that was found and capped off from the beach in 2011. Plans to divert into local combined sewerage network in early 2022 at a cost of circa £85,000
- Understanding the geology and impacts from groundwater with new boreholes drilled and sampled
- 10s of litres of biodegradable florescent dye used for tracing
- Over £60,000 spent in investigating local drainage and fixing any issues, both public and private
- Around £110,000 invested in Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP) investigations to determine the most likely causes.
- Ongoing engagement with local community groups, Surfers Against Sewage and Harbour Association. Includes support from local expert in geology, mining workings and tidal patterns.
- Confirmed toilets at Cullercoats Metro station via Nexus are either decommissioned or flow into sewerage system correctly to the west.

We remain committed to doing all that we can to support our partners and the process, until the water quality matches our aspirations.

**Councillor J Johnsson asked the following supplementary question:**

In relation to the task force, is there an opportunity for that to be a cross party group in order for us to have some involvement in that?

**Councillor H Johnson provided the following response:**

Stakeholders will include local authority officers, community representatives and partner organisations inclusive of Northumbrian Water and the Environment Agency.

### **Question 7 – Councillor K Nott**

As councillors, we all know how much of a priority repairing potholes is for our residents. Could the Mayor confirm how much additional funding the council has received from the Government following the announcement at the end of last year and update members on the progress of Capita coming back in house at the start of the month?

**Councillor H Johnson provided the following response:**

Our North Tyneside Plan includes a commitment to invest additional capital funding in repairing our highway network. In the last 7 years over £102million has been invested in the maintenance and improvement of our highway network. This includes an additional £2million each year in the Council's budget.

In 2024/25 £3.2million of capital investment into highways was obtained from the Department for Transport. This funding provides the Council with opportunities to deliver a targeted approach to addressing potholes and general highway condition.

In December 2024 the North East Combined Authority received an indicative allocation of £23 million for investment in highways. We are currently waiting to see how this will be disaggregated to the regional highway authorities.

Highway Services returned to the Council from Capita on 1 January. This provides the Council with greater control and enables us to undertake more targeted permanent repairs which we know is a priority for our residents

It also highlights once again what an absolute disaster the Tories created the last time they ran this Council. Whether it be the massive failure of the previous Tory Administration when they outsourced services to Capita and ENGIE, when they increased Council debt by nearly £200million over four years despite promising to reduce it, when they threatened to close libraries and Leisure Centres with endless rolling reviews and when they dithered and delayed on all manner of

capital investment decisions leaving Labour to fix the Tory's mess when we came into power in 2013.

**Question 8 – Councillor M Murphy**

Our outstanding Children's Services do a fantastic job preparing children for life after care. Is there any more we can do to increase the number of care leavers who attend university?

**Councillor P Earley provided the following response:**

We are incredibly proud that 10% of our Care Leavers are currently studying at university. This is testament to the robust offer we have in place to improve attainment and progression for the children in our care and care leavers. Our HIVE team provides direct teaching support and an outstanding and innovative therapeutic offer to help children and young people address the trauma they have experienced and reduce the barriers to learning.

A lot of our work focuses on raising aspirations and broadening horizons for children and young people and this remains ongoing. To do this we are currently progressing a range of opportunities for young people to observe, visit and experience different job roles and environments.

We recognise that the academic route is not the only option for young people and so we provide support for young people to progress in a range of ways. As a result of this we have seen successful progression in Further Education for many young people taking a vocational approach who then move onto degrees.

We also offer additional financial support for university accommodation and young people are supported by their leaving care workers to apply for the bursaries available to care leavers through universities.

**Councillor L Bones asked to move a Motion Without Notice, seconded by Councillor J Bartoli.**

The Motion asked that the meeting proceed directly onto the next Agenda item as Councillor Bones stated that his view that Questions 9 to 13 would be better answered by the Mayor or in writing, rather than as part of the Full Council meeting. Councillor Bones stated that this Motion Without Notice did not seek to

downplay the importance of the items to be omitted.

**Votes for the Motion Without Notice:**

Councillors J Bartoli, L Bones, J Johnsson, D Lilly, I McAlpine, C McGinty and Dr O Scargill.

**Votes against the Motion Without Notice:**

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

**The Motion Without Notice was rejected with 7 for and 46 against.**

(At this point, Councillors J Bartoli, L Bones, J Johnsson, D Lilly, I McAlpine, C McGinty and Dr O Scargill left the meeting)

**Question 9 – Councillor J Montague**

Child poverty in the North East has increased by 44% during the last Conservative Government. Last year on taking office, the Mayor of the North East, Kim McGuinness made tackling child poverty her number one policy priority. How will the Elected Mayor work with Kim McGuinness and the North East Combined Authority to tackle child poverty in North Tyneside?

**Councillor K Clark provided the following response:**

North Tyneside is already leading the way across the region through our work to tackle child poverty – including through the Poverty Intervention Fund. By being part of the new North East Combined Authority, we can do even more. As part of the North East Combined Authority's Cabinet, our Mayor plays a key role in developing and shaping the region wide strategy to tackle poverty. That strategy now includes setting up an innovative regional Child Poverty Reduction Unit to develop new ways to tackle the issue. This will be the first child poverty reduction unit in the UK and we will be working very closely with the North East Combined

Authority around this key priority which I believe is an exciting opportunity to make a real difference to the lives of children.

Work will focus on four key areas – ensuring the best start in life, maximising family income, supporting people to be able to get into work and sharing of best practice across the region.

North Tyneside families have already benefited directly through our regional work including 42 schools which have had support including after school clubs and family learning school Improvement support staff professional development and different bespoke Grant funded projects. We've also had 128 baby boxes provided to families to ensure Essentials are in place for newborn babies.

I also take the opportunity to welcome the Labour government's groundbreaking children's well-being in schools bill that includes a range of policy areas that will support poverty reduction aiming to break the link between a young person's background and their future success.

#### **Question 10 – Councillor C Gray**

After 14 years of austerity, the NHS is really struggling while millions of people don't receive the care they need and deserve. The winter flu season has demonstrated the consequences of underfunding the NHS by successive Conservative governments, will the Elected Mayor explain what North Tyneside Council is doing to protect public health in North Tyneside?

#### **Councillor K Clark provided the following response:**

A short answer would be – an awful lot across all areas of life. We know the NHS is currently facing a major crisis and major challenges, both now and looking ahead into the future, and in fact we were just discussing that at this morning's Health and Wellbeing Board. In North Tyneside we know we are very fortunate our residents are served by an excellent NHS service, but we also know that going forward we need well-funded Health Services and we need to reduce the demands on those health services and that can only be done through preventative measures and further investment in prevention.

That's where Public Health comes in because Public Health is essentially about protection and prevention. North Tyneside Council is a Public Health Organisation



which utilizes its functions powers and Expertise, its understanding of and relationship with our communities, our extensive Partnerships across all sectors to promote and protect our residents Health.

The local Authority receives a significant Public Health Grant from central government. I'm sad to say that the value of that Grant has actually decreased in the past last 10 years, it was 10% less in 23/24 than it was in 2013/14 and per person that spending cut is even greater. I think taken in the context of increased demand through the impact of Covid and the cost of living crisis that has had an impact.

The local authority also provides and commissions a range of services through that nationally allocated Public Health grant. These services include stop smoking services, drug and alcohol services, children's public health services, sexual health services, the NHS health check programme, programmes to prevent obesity and the national childhood measurement programme, all of which improve health outcomes for our residents.

We also work closely with our NHS to improve the take up of vaccination programs such as the flu as this remains the best defence against catching the virus and as we may recall throughout the pandemic, the Local Authority works highly effectively with local Regional and National Partners to prevent and protect residents from infectious diseases and outbreaks. Public Health is also about tackling the wider social and economic determinants of health conditions in which we live and work and live our lives.

We need to help stop people getting ill in the first place and reduce the pressures on health services and reduce the gap in health inequalities and premature deaths. The North Tyneside Health and Wellbeing Board ensures there is an integrated approach to Public Health bringing together colleagues from across the authority in housing, planning, neighbourhood social care to collectively improve outcomes. The Health and Wellbeing Board is responsible for the joint Health and Wellbeing strategy which tackles Health inequalities across the borough; it's a long-term commitment a high level strategic plan and approach and it has an annual implementation plan to monitor progress against all the key themes of that strategy. In general, we're working across the board across wider and beyond Council services with a wide range of multi-agency partners to protect and prevent illness among our residents of North Tyneside.

**Question 11 – Councillor M Thirlaway (Taken as read in his absence)**

Would the Elected Mayor tell us how many children in total have benefited from the work of the Poverty Intervention Fund since it was first established?

**Councillor K Clark provided the following response:**

The Poverty Intervention Fund was set up in 2020 by this Labour Administration and whilst it is vitally important and highly Innovative, it is just one of the ways this Council continues to support children and families who are experiencing the harsh effects of poverty.

The fund is supplemented by other funding including the Household Support Fund and funding from the Department of Education for the holiday activity and food program. An additional match funding has also been secured from local Partners which has maximized the impact locally and enabled the offer of additional spaces to children not on income related preschool meals, it's quite a complex thing to determine the exact numbers because some children may have access to more than one source of support through the funds available, some children might be in receipt of food vouchers and they might attend holiday activity programs. What we can say with certainty is through 'poverty proofing' the school day 12,834 children have benefited and that was funded directly through the Poverty Intervention Fund so that's one example of where that fund has actually supported literally thousands of children in this borough.

We're also tackling holiday hunger providing Supermarket vouchers directly to families with children eligible for income based free School meals. These have been provided to every child during every school holiday since December 2020 at a value of 15 pound per week per eligible child. The number of children benefiting in 2020 was around 7,300 but the number has increased since covid-19 and the cost of living crisis, and at the last count was 8,652 in the Christmas holidays benefitting from those vouchers. That was originally set up to be funded through the Poverty Intervention Fund though now it is funded through the household support fund.

Our children have also benefited indirectly through a range of wider support interventions not directly targeting children but targeting families including food

pantries, social supermarkets, cookery sessions etc and in addition the holiday activity food program has supported 8565 children with meals through the DFA holiday activity and match funding from local Partners. Uniform grants have been given to 803 families and winter clothing grants have been provided through vouchers to 997 families, those are funded through the household support fund. I think what's been a really exciting development since the introduction of the Poverty Intervention Fund is there's been a much sharper focus on tackling poverty here within North Tyneside and we've set up multi-agency Poverty Intervention Partnership Board, we have the community and voluntary sector partnership Network as well as the Elected Member Poverty Intervention Steering group and all of those structures feed into identifying priorities and directing targeted resources to where they're most needed.

### **Question 12 – Councillor S Day**

How can we work together with our regional Mayor Kim McGuinness and the Police and Crime Commissioner, Susan Dungworth, to create a situation where women and girls can have increased trust, confidence, and perceptions of safety when walking our streets?

### **Councillor K Clark provided the following response:**

I think whilst we're very fortunate that North Tyneside comparably is a safe place to live, work and visit I firmly agree we must absolutely continue to find ways of ensuring women and girls always feel safe in all locations across the borough and this is an issue I feel extremely strongly about on a personal level. We are working in numerous ways with the Regional Mayor and the Police and Crime Commissioner around this particular agenda as reflected in our various documents, strategies and plans including the Safer North Tyneside Partnership plan, the Police and Crime Commissioner Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, the White Ribbon Delivery group, Domestic Abuse partnership etc

In addition, the council receives a grant from the Police Crime Commissioner's office to support the work of our Community Protection team in carrying out patrols across the borough that provide a visible reassurance to the community. This work is carried out through the Safer Streets Fund Round 5 programme, "Woman Safety in Public Places".

The programme aims to change attitudes and behaviours towards Violence

Against Woman and Girls, in line with the Mayor McGuinness's manifesto, with the long-term goal of reducing crimes in public, and to Improve the feelings of safety for women and girls in public spaces and the nighttime economy.

The Community Protection Team have carried out over 150 patrols and engaged with or supported 117 people providing additional reassurance in our communities between April 2024 and December 2024 as part of that particular initiative. I'm really pleased to see that the safety of women and girls is a key area of focus for the new draft local transport plan for the North East combined Authority area which is currently open for public consultation.

### **Question 13 – Councillor T Hallway**

As we welcome the regional government's commitment to deliver a zero-tolerance policy towards hate crime and harassment on public transport, what sorts of new measures can women in North Tyneside expect to see when they travel on bus and Metro?

### **Councillor K Clark provided the following response:**

One of the core aims of the Our North Tyneside Plan is to deliver a secure North Tyneside and we have made a commitment through our Hate Crime Policy Statement to work with all key partners to prevent the occurrence of hate crime.

As stated earlier, the Safety of women and girls is a key area of focus for the new draft Local Transport Plan for the North East Combined Authority area, which is currently open for public consultation. The draft transport plan sets out a number of proposed actions, including:

- i. raising awareness of channels available to report concerns, e.g. by telephone or text message;
- ii. targeting resources at areas identified by women and girls in the region as feeling unsafe; and
- iii. enhanced training for staff on the transport network to help prevent and manage violence against women and girls.

There will be a wide range of improvements mentioned in that draft plan including on public transport but also at stations and inbetween stops.

The Authority has worked together with Northumbria Police and Nexus through

Operation Coastwatch and Operation Maple to help prevent anti-social behaviour on the Metro and in the coastal areas, and all Metro stations are now alcohol exclusion zones and are covered by Nexus CCTV.

Our Community Protection teams are working alongside Nexus and neighbouring local authorities to carry out targeted patrols at interchange hubs where females may travel alone or are returning from an evening out with friends and may be vulnerable.

The situation will further improve as the new Metro Fleet is brought into service. There are 44 high definition digital CCTV cameras on each of the new Metro trains, the carriages have an intercom system on board which allows customers to speak to the driver at the push of a button. They also have brighter clearer lighting, a more open layout with linear seating which offers visibility right down the length of the carriage.

The Authority also co-ordinates meetings with public transport operators through the Local Bus Board. Our plans for the North Shields Transport Hub were developed with safety in mind and, before finalising the design, we held a consultation event focused improve public safety, specifically for women.

Based on the feedback received, changes were made to the design and operation of that building to further improve Public Safety. Both the Authority and Nexus are also signed up to support White Ribbon, which is a partnership to prevent violence against women and girls. Following the public consultation period on the new draft local transport plan, I look forward to welcoming the final plan and to see further improved safety measures to protect women and girls and indeed all of our residents across all of our Transport Systems.

A member asked that, following the withdrawal of the Conservative group from the meeting, for clarification from the Monitoring Officer about which members are able to ask questions and whether the Mayor is able to decide who answers them.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the Council's Constitution sets out the opportunity for members to ask questions of the Executive or of the Authority in relation to matters relating to the Borough and / or the Council. Those questions must be submitted in a particular time frame and provided that they are not otherwise improper, such as being defamatory, then they will be come through to

the Council meeting and be included on the agenda.

In terms of who responds, the officer confirmed that it is a matter for the Elected Mayor whether she wishes to respond or whether she wishes to ask one of her Cabinet members to respond. The officers stated that the questions asked for this meeting fell within the framework of the Constitution and were not improper.

#### **C71/24 Chair's Announcements**

The Chair reiterated that the Members' questions asked and answered in this meeting were legal and valid and stated that he was disappointed that those members that had left had chosen not to listen to the responses given.

The Chair reminded those present that as the meeting is streamed live and recorded, the answers are available for members to look at in their own time.

#### **C72/24 Elected Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor thanked all members of Children's Services, Authority partners and all other Stakeholders in relation to their recent Outstanding graded Ofsted report.

The Mayor also expressed her dismay that a number of elected members had left the meeting early.