

Local Government Act 1972

Borough of North Tyneside

Thursday, 18 March 2021

At the meeting of the Council of the Borough of North Tyneside duly convened and held on Thursday, 18 March 2021 at 6.00 pm at which a quorum of Members were present, that is to say:

Present

Councillor W Lott (Chair)
N Redfearn (Elected Mayor)

Councillor J Allan	Councillor A Austin
Councillor L Bartoli	Councillor G Bell
Councillor L Bell	Councillor T Brady
Councillor S Brockbank	Councillor B Burdis
Councillor C Burdis	Councillor J Cassidy
Councillor K Clark	Councillor D Cox
Councillor S Cox	Councillor N Craven
Councillor J Cruddas	Councillor E Darke
Councillor L Darke	Councillor C Davis
Councillor S Day	Councillor D Drummond
Councillor P Earley	Councillor R Glindon
Councillor S Graham	Councillor M Green
Councillor J Harrison	Councillor Janet Hunter
Councillor John Hunter	Councillor N Huscroft
Councillor C Johnson	Councillor J Kirwin
Councillor K Lee	Councillor F Lott
Councillor G Madden	Councillor M Madden
Councillor P McIntyre	Councillor A McMullen
Councillor T Mulvenna	Councillor M Hall
Councillor J Mole	Councillor A Newman
Councillor P Oliver	Councillor J O'Shea
Councillor E Parker-Leonard	Councillor A Percy
Councillor S Phillips	Councillor B Pickard
Councillor M Rankin	Councillor P Richardson
Councillor W Samuel	Councillor J Stirling
Councillor M Thirlaway	Councillor J Walker
Councillor J Wallace	Councillor M Wilson

Apologies: Councillor K Barrie and Councillor F Weetman

C97/20 To receive any Declarations of Interest

Declarations of interest were reported as follows:

Councillor G Bell – Item 5 - Motion 1 – non-registerable personal interest as a Member of a Trade Union.

Councillor K Clark – Item 7 – Children and Young People’s Plan 2021-2025, registerable personal interest - employed by an organisation that receives funding from the Authority.

Councillor J Cruddas – Item 7 – Children and Young People’s Plan 2021-2025, registerable personal interest – employed by an organisation that receives funding from the Authority.

Councillor D Cox – Item 5 - Motion 2 – registerable personal interest employed by the NHS. Councillor Cox indicated she would not take part in the vote.

Councillor A McMullen – Item 5 - Motion 1 – non-registerable personal interest as a Member of a Trade Union.

Councillor P Oliver – Item 7 – Children and Youngs People’s Plan 2021-2025 non-registerable personal interest – family member receives support provided by the Authority.

C98/20 Minutes of the meetings held on 21 January & 18 February 2021 (previously circulated)

Resolved that the minutes of the Council meetings held on 21 January and 18 February 2021 be taken as read, confirmed and signed by the Chair.

C99/20 Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel

Council gave consideration to the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel in relation to the Members’ Allowances Scheme for 2021/22.

The Chair welcomed Mr John Anderson, the Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel, who presented the report to the meeting.

The Panel had recommended that no change be made to the current Members’ Allowances Scheme for the 2021/22 financial year.

The Chair thanked the Panel for the report.

It was moved by the Elected Mayor N Redfearn and seconded by Councillor F Lott that:

Council approve the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel on the Scheme of Members’ Allowances for 2021/22.

Councillor F Lott moved a procedural motion that the question be now put.

The procedural Motion, on being put to the meeting, was approved by 43 votes to 4 votes.

The Motion, on being put to the meeting, was approved by 46 votes to 0 votes.

C100/20 Motion 1 - Trade Union Rights

It was moved by Councillor A McMullen and seconded by Councillor J Kirwin that:

North Tyneside Council notes:

- The Conservative government since 2010 has overseen a major dilution of Trade unions rights.
- Fire and rehire' tactics have been rife throughout the pandemic with 1 in 10 workers having been told to re-apply for their own job.
- These tactics often under the threat of dismissal are used to force through inferior terms and conditions and wage cuts.
- Amid the health and economic insecurity, hundreds of thousands of workers, including employees of companies such as British Airways and Centrica are being bounced into signing away their pay.
- This practice is outlawed in many European countries.
- Conservative Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Business, Paul Scully, shamefully told the House of Commons the "flexibility" offered to businesses by the absence of fire and rehire being banned in legislation is "necessary".

North Tyneside Council believes:

- This practice of firing and rehiring is shameful and should be outlawed.
- This would benefit millions of people overnight, but it will also support the responsible employers while making clear to those with fewer scruples that these sorts of actions are not tolerated in this country.
- It is immoral for employers to play fast and loose with the security of employees who have given decades of their lives to an employer.

North Tyneside Council calls upon the Mayor:

- To write to Mary Glendon MP and Sir Alan Campbell MP and ask them to support the banning of fire and rehire in Parliament.
- Write to the Prime Minister urging him to bring forward legislation that bans fire and rehire.

The Motion, on being put to the meeting, was approved by 48 votes to 4 votes.

C101/20 Motion 2 - Government Funding

(Councillor D Cox took no part in the discussion or voting on this item).

It was moved by Councillor C Johnson and seconded by Councillor M Thirlaway that:

North Tyneside Council Notes:

- The Conservative Government refused to back cross-party plans in the North East to give freeport to areas in the North East like the Port of Tyne.
- This decision has cost the North East 60,000 jobs and £2.6 Billion in investment.
- North Tyneside was placed in priority group 2 for the levelling up fund while the Chancellors leafy Richmondshire authority was placed in priority group 1.
- Many towns represented by members of the Cabinet were granted access to the town's fund, while the Conservative Government forgot about places like Killingworth, North Shields, Wallsend and Whitley Bay.
- The public accounts committee said it was “not convinced by the rationale for selecting some towns and not others”, with ministers’ reasoning “vague and based on sweeping assumptions”
- The Conservative Government missed the chance to fix the broken social care funding model which heaps financial pressure on local government.
- The Government may have clapped for our carers and local Government heroes but once again has failed to support them.
- The Conservative Government have shamefully only offered our NHS heroes a 1% increase in pay despite everything they have done for this country during the pandemic.

North Tyneside Council believes:

- The government is playing pork-barrel politics, 40 of 45 places granted access to the town's fund has a Tory MP and the Chancellor has prioritised spending in seats the Conservatives won last year.
- If the decision to place North Tyneside in category 2 for the 'Town's fund' is not reversed it will place us at the back of the line for economic support.
- That the decision to not award the North East LEP area freeport status could severely damage the region’s economy.
- This budget contains nothing that will help ‘Level up’ North Tyneside.
- The 1% pay rise offered to NHS workers is shameful.

North Tyneside Council calls upon the Mayor to:

Write to the Chancellor and ask him to;

- Review and reverse his decision to not award the North East LEP area freeport status.

- Review North Tyneside's priority 2 category in the designation in the 'Levelling up' fund.
- Review his decision to do nothing on social care in the budget and fix the broken funding model.
- Give our NHS heroes the pay rise they deserve
- Review his decision to not give any of our towns access to the 'Towns fund'
- Give our Local Government heroes the pay rise they deserve.
- Write to Mary Glendon MP and Sir Alan Campbell MP and ask them to raise these issues in Parliament with the Chancellor.

The Motion on being put to the meeting, was approved by 47 votes to 0 votes, with 4 abstentions.

C102/20 Motion 3 - Funding for Adult Social Care

It was moved by Councillor W Samuel and seconded by Councillor S Day that:

North Tyneside Council Notes:

This Council regrets the continuing failure of successive Governments to provide sufficient resources to support adult social care in England. Councils have been forced to accept the adult social care precept in full, year on year, to ensure the stability of this service. We note that even with this funding there are inadequate resources to tackle the increasing demand.

Council agrees to request the elected mayor to write to the Prime Minister demanding that he supply additional ring-fenced funding centrally at a minimum equal or greater than the level of the precept thus avoiding the need to place this burden directly on council taxpayers in future years.

The motion, on being put to the meeting, was approved by 47 votes to 0 votes, with 4 abstentions.

C103/20 North Tyneside Council Pay Policy 2021/22

The Council received a report which presented the Pay Policy statement 2021/22 that set out the Authority's policies on a range of pay matters relating to the workforce, including senior employees (Chief Officers).

The Pay Policy had not changed significantly during the previous 12 months, with the main change being the inclusion of the North Tyneside Council Living Wage as agreed by the full Council on 26 November 2020. The pay multiple and the gender pay gap had been calculated as at 31 March 2020.

The Authority had a statutory duty to publish the Pay Policy Statement following the approval by the full Council.

It was moved by Councillor B Pickard and seconded by Councillor R Glindon that:

- (1) the Pay Policy statement 2021/22 be approved; and
- (2) the publication of the Pay Policy be authorised.

The Motion, on being put to the meeting, was approved by 51 votes to 0 votes.

C104/20 Children & Young People's Plan 2021-2025

Council received a report seeking approval for the adoption of the Children and Young People's Plan 2021-2025.

The Plan was a key strategy used by the North Tyneside Partnership to deliver the priorities set out within the Our North Tyneside Plan, particularly in relation to 'Our People'. It set out the strategic framework and partnership priorities to ensure that all children in North Tyneside were able to achieve their full potential.

It was moved by Councillor P Earley and seconded by Councillor M Wilson that:

Council approve and adopt the final version of the Children and Young People's Plan 2021 – 2025 appended to the report.

The Motion, on being put to the meeting, was approved by 51 votes to 0 votes.

C105/20 Chair's Announcements

The Chair wished Members who were to stand in the Election in May the best of luck. She offered any Members who were not seeking re-election the opportunity to address the meeting if they wished. Councillor Alison Austin accepted and addressed the meeting.

The Chair ended her announcements by thanking all Council Staff for their continued work in providing essential services to the residents in North Tyneside.

C106/20 Elected Mayor's Announcements

The Elected Mayor thanked all Councillors, her Cabinet Members and all Council Staff for their efforts throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. She went on to say that staff had continued to ensure the delivery of essential services to the vulnerable, the elderly and young children with some putting their own health at risk to do so. She thanked the residents and businesses that had volunteered to help their communities.

The Elected Mayor thanked Councillor W Lott for the two years she had served as Chair of Council and wished Councillor Austin well for the future.

The Elected Mayor ended her announcement by urging everyone to continue to follow the rules to keep North Tyneside safe.

C107/20 Questions by Members of the Council

1. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor Frank Lott

What investment has been made in North Tyneside into Roads, Pavements, and associated

infrastructure?

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

Thank you, Councillor Lott for your question.

I know from listening to our residents and our Mayor that a well-maintained highway network is very important to our communities. Investment in roads and pavements has therefore been one of Mayor Redfearn's and my top priorities.

In the last 5 years we have invested around £24 million in day to day maintenance of the highway network and £5 million in bridges and other infrastructure. This includes an additional £8 million of extra council funding on top of the regular funds we have for highways anyway. This has led to:

- 56 miles of roads being resurfaced
- 350 individual footway improvement schemes
- Strengthening work to Wallsend Road Bridge and other structures
- Over 100 highway drainage improvement schemes

We also have an excellent track record in securing external grant funding which has allowed us to deliver a wide range of major capital highway improvement schemes. During my time in office we have secured around £25 million in grant funding and have successfully delivered numerous major schemes including:

- A new interchange at Coast Road / Billy Mill junction
- Widening of Beach Road
- Complete replacement of Norham Road Bridge
- Upgrades to provide a continuous cycle lane from the coast to Newcastle
- Improvements to Sandy Lane
- Enhanced links from the A19 to Cobalt business park
- Upgrades to multiple junctions along the north bank of the River Tyne

These major capital schemes have incorporated significant improvements to cycling and walking infrastructure in line with our Transport Strategy and associated sustainable travel policies.

There has also been massive external investment coming into the borough on the back of Labour work as well. The £75m scheme alone at Silverlink to improve the Silverlink roundabout was remarkable. So, in Mayor Redfearn's term in the last 8 years it tops up to about £150m of highways investment, be that by the Council or our external partners in this Borough.

The considerable investment we have made in roads and pavements has made a noticeable improvement to our highway network. Our latest surveys show that we are one of the best performing authorities in the region when it comes to the condition of roads and pavements. This is especially pleasing given that reduced Government funding allocations has put extra pressure on local highways authorities to make up shortfalls in maintenance budgets. I look forward to continuing the good work we have been doing on roads and pavements which I am sure will result in further improvements to the network in the coming years.

Councillor F Lott asked the following supplementary question:

As a pedestrian, cyclist and motorist will the investment continue into the future?

Councillor C Johnson responded as follows:

Absolutely, as long as the Labour Party continues to be elected in this Borough we will continue and remain committed to investing additional council money in the highway network in future years. We already have an exciting pipeline of new large capital schemes and know where the priorities are in relation to roads and pavements over the next couple of years. So, as long as we are in power the Labour Party will always invest in roads and pavements in North Tyneside.

2. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor Naomi Craven

What plans do the Council, and its partners have to tackle Anti-social behaviour and environmental issues over the summer?

Councillor C Burdis responded on behalf of the Elected Mayor as follows:

Thank you, Councillor Craven for your question which covers a very important issue for the council, its partners and of course our residents.

On the 22nd February government announced its roadmap to ease Covid-19 lockdown restrictions in England.

Stay at home restrictions are to ease, however we are fully aware from our experiences last year that the threat of anti-social behaviour both nationally and locally is highly likely to increase as restrictions are eased.

Residents are right to be concerned about the increasing risk of anti-social behaviour and the related environmental problems such as littering in our parks, open spaces, and beaches.

As we all know, North Tyneside is a borough to be proud of and due to the regeneration we have delivered under Elected Mayor Norma Redfearn means that our coast is extremely attractive to visitors.

The coronavirus pandemic has meant people are now holidaying closer to home and the leisure economy has shifted from city centres to the coast. This presents a significant challenge to us.

Members will remember in June Northumbria Police stepped in to clamp down on anti-social behaviour following a weekend of trouble on our beaches. Those responsible were notably not from North Tyneside. At Christmas, there were issues at our coastal villages related to outside drinking, which had been permitted by legislation introduced by the government.

Unfortunately, during the pandemic government's rules were often confusing to the public and enforcement powers to accompany the rules were, quite frankly, not been strong

enough.

Our preparations for the coming months have involved a multi-agency approach, led by Police colleagues and Councillor Craven, you will be pleased to know that we have implemented that plan now because we recognise we cannot wait until summer itself.

Long before the pandemic, we introduced new community protection wardens, a new environmental rapid response team, an upgraded CCTV control room with new state of the art cameras and a new CCTV vehicle and other re-deployable resources targeting known hotspots.

During the pandemic, a package of further measures has been introduced to tackle identified hotspots. These include:

- Introduction of a team of marshals to help advise the public on Covid guidance and regulations
- Introduction of a team of Covid enforcement officers to bolster our regulatory capacity
- Introduction of more flexible working arrangements across our teams to cover evenings and weekends
- Implementation of Operation Coast Watch with Northumbria Police and partners. This is the key operational policing plan designed to cover the warmer months from Easter until end of September. The plan includes:
 - Increased policing and council patrols
 - Alcohol and drug stops at Metro stations
 - Working with local shops around the sale of alcohol
 - Placing a temporary police station on seafront.

We are also expanding the Marshals service by an additional 12 with an enhanced role to include enforcement powers across the Borough.

The Beach Warden Service will start earlier from April rather than from June and additional seasonal workers will focus on litter hotspots across the borough.

We will also put in a further 100 litter bins in areas of high footfall including parks, open spaces and at the coast with the team focused on emptying and removing litter.

CCTV is an important part of our strategy and we will be introducing a further 5 Wireless CCTV cameras to cover all of the coastline, key parks and public spaces including the Rising Sun and Lockey Park and bringing in a further two CCTV vehicles to increase the coverage of patrols across the borough, giving greater visibility and confidence to our residents

To conclude, I am sure you will agree that my response to your question Councillor Craven has been lengthy and has covered a lot of ground. That is indicative however of the seriousness of this year's expected challenge and I hope that gives you and other Members in this chamber confidence of our intended approach.

Councillor Craven asked the following supplementary question:

How much has the Council set aside to support the delivery of the plan?

Councillor C Burdis responded as follows:

The cost of the extra measures being introduced is in the region of £0.25 million. The figure at the moment is £241,850 but we are expecting it will be around £0.25 million.

3. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor Matthew Thirlaway

What progress has the Council made on tackling plastic free agenda and the climate emergency?

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

Thank you for your question on what is a difficult challenge that we all face.

In July 2019 Council declared a Climate Emergency, setting a target to reduce the carbon footprint of the Authority and the Borough by 50% by 2023, and to become carbon neutral by 2050.

At the end of 2019/20 the Council's carbon footprint was down by 46% and we have seen a reduction since then as well. The latest data we have for the Borough is for 2018 and that shows a 40% reduction, so we are well on track to meet our 2023 targets.

Following the Council's decision to declare a Climate Emergency we established a Climate Emergency Board, which is jointly chaired by me and is overseeing a programme of work that is further reducing North Tyneside's carbon emissions. Despite the significant and far reaching challenges that coronavirus has placed upon the Authority, I am delighted to report that we continue to make excellent progress towards our targets and progressing to the next stage to bring local people on board into our climate emergency action plan to make it a bottom up approach.

To give you just a flavour of some of the work the Climate Board is overseeing:

- We have, in-flight, a £0.5 million project installing more energy efficient LED street lighting happening right now, and over £4 million allocated to the next phase of this programme to convert the rest of our streetlighting to LED by 2023. This is a significant investment in LED lighting, which will also see a significant carbon reduction right across the borough.
- The Authority has been successful in attaining a £3.2 million grant to install low carbon heating in four of our most energy intensive buildings and the plans are being drawn up now to deliver this investment. This is replacing old gas boilers in our most energy intensive buildings with air-source heat pumps, which massively reduces our carbon footprint in those buildings.
- Over £6 million has been secured by this Authority so far in this financial year for energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures.

We have also the Killingworth depot that continues to progress. We have ensured carbon reduction was at the forefront of our thinking when we planned the much-needed investment in our operational estate. For example, the on-site solar PV electricity generation will help to reduce the electricity consumption from the national grid by between 80-90% and gas consumption to reduce dramatically by up to 50%, a massive carbon saving.

We plan to replace all our Light Goods Vehicles with low carbon alternatives, such as electric vehicles, by 2030 and this is already underway

During the pandemic the Authority has seen a reduction in energy consumption in our operational buildings and in the miles staff travel to deliver services to the public. We are exploring ways to maintain as much of these reductions as possible in the future.

In relation to Single Use Plastics, I am very pleased to report the following:

- We are installing public water fountains at strategic locations along our coastline and in the rest of the Borough in parks and other similar areas. We involved our Youth Council to help identify the most suitable locations and I'd like to thank them for their work.
- This gives us a significant opportunity to tackle single use plastic drink containers that blight our parks and is a large part of the waste stream we get from our parks and our coastline. This gives families and individuals the opportunity whenever they are out on our coastline to take a reusable bottle with them and fill it up when they are there.
- We are also installing some brand-new water fountains in our leisure centres to help us to remove the need for single use plastics in these locations.
- From 2022, where practical and other alternatives can be sourced, single use plastics will not be permitted at Authority managed events. The Authority will also implement an Events Charter to reduce our environmental impact. Within the next couple of years we will see around the Borough and the country a deposit return scheme, which will massively help us reach our single use plastic target.

Whilst there is more to do, as there always is, I hope my response reassures you that since the climate emergency declaration there has been good progress made to reduce our carbon footprint, we have exciting plans to keep on reducing the carbon footprint and environmental impact of our operations and we will continue to do all we can to reduce the Borough's use of single use plastic. However, we cannot do this alone. We need more Government support for climate emergency and for single use plastic. We can only take it so. We need Government funding immediately to help us meet our future targets. Every single local authority in the country needs this. We are making a great stab at it already and we are well on the way.

4. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor Anthony McMullen

Our home care workers are among the essential workers who have been the true heroes of this pandemic, has the Council considered doing anything to improve their terms and conditions and future career prospects?

Councillor G Bell responded on behalf of the Elected Mayor as follows:

We are embarking on a pilot model in the northwest of the borough with 50 clients to develop a new role and profession that will span the social care functions enabling a single worker to remain the only visiting professional to the home of the service user with much more specialist roles in supplementing the support only when necessary.

To develop this role we have an opportunity to secure funding from the North of Tyne

Combined Authority as well as exploring the development of an apprenticeship route creating a new career pathway.

The benefit of this model for the service user would provide continued support and strengthen relationships.

For both organisations the efficiency of resource deployment and the ability to focus specialist capability on specialist service delivery.

For the public sector investment to develop new services to meet need whilst generating efficiencies in the current learning model and resources linked to current operations.

For the borough the creation of a new profession in North Tyneside to support the local workforce market.

These new roles could develop our respective health and social care staff of the future, open opportunities to a potential wider workforce.

For the environment reduced travel time costs and carbon footprint.

The pilot could commence in April 2021, but may be delayed because of Covid, for a period running between 1-2 years depending on potential apprenticeships and we will then do an evaluation.

As Cabinet member my vision is to bring a proper career structure for carers, whilst also looking to bring services in-house where we can and where it's affordable.

5. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor Tommy Mulvenna

What progress is the Council making on its building of affordable homes?

Councillor S Cox responded on behalf of the Elected Mayor as follows:

The Council has continued to make excellent progress delivering much needed affordable homes in North Tyneside.

Members will recall in October 2013, the Mayor Norma Redfearn set out an ambition to deliver 3,000 new affordable homes by 2024. By the end of March 2021, I am delighted with the progress that has been made with 1,650 new affordable homes being delivered.

The first 7 years of the Affordable Homes Programme has delivered more than double the number of affordable homes that were delivered in the previous 10 years.

We have seen new council homes, specialist accommodation and we have returned many long-term empty properties back into use all as part of this programme.

With regards to empty properties I would remind Members that these properties often have a very dramatic effect on the local communities where they are placed and they can cause many problems for local residents so I'm pleased we have been able to use this program to tackle these and bring them back into use as affordable homes and to remove the blight on the neighbourhoods in which they are often placed.

Building on this success, Cabinet reviewed progress in January this year and agreed to align the delivery target to match the lifecycle of the Local Plan and at the same time, further increase the target from 3,000 to 4,000 new affordable homes by 2032.

As part of this review Cabinet also approved an exciting and ambitious plan that will see the Council invest around £50m to deliver 350 new council homes over the next ten years.

Councillor Mulvenna asked the following supplementary question:

How many homes has the Council delivered directly?

Councillor S Cox responded as follows:

Since 2013, the Council has directly delivered over 550 new council homes. This includes 363 new sheltered accommodation across the Borough and nearly 200 individual new council homes including properties built for people with specialist housing need.

A fully resourced plan was agreed by Cabinet in January 2021 that will see a further 350 new council homes built in the next ten years.

6. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor Sandra Graham

The poverty intervention fund has proved a fantastic success, can the Mayor confirm it is continuing?

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

I am pleased to confirm that the poverty intervention fund is set to continue in 2021/22 with an allocation of £600,000, which was agreed in the budget at the last council meeting. The Council is committed to continuing to tackle the impacts of poverty on families and individuals across North Tyneside, building on the success of the first year.

We have as a council worked to tackle the causes of poverty in a variety of ways, by working to improve economic growth, attract inward investment to create jobs, support businesses and enabling young people to gain skills and improve education outcomes.

However, we also know that the impacts of poverty have a devastating impact on the life chances of some of our residents. The effects are felt throughout the life cycle, with child poverty, childhood obesity, attainment in school, employment, and life expectancy. These effects can be startling with for instance the child poverty rate varying from 16% in one area of the Borough to 43% in another. Also life expectancy for an individual born in the most deprived area of North Tyneside can be 11 years less than for someone born in a more prosperous area of the Borough.

The Covid-19 pandemic has further exacerbated this by exposing the real effects of poverty both in terms of health and income. At last night's Members' briefing we were shown the inequality in the cumulative infection rates for those in advantaged areas and those in the least advantaged areas. We are determined to address the financial, social and health impacts that are experienced as a result of poverty.

This year, the Poverty Intervention Fund has been a vital lifeline to some of our most vulnerable residents, by providing access to food, clothing and benefits advice at a time when people have most needed this support. The continuation of the fund will allow us to further target key areas in the coming year.

Councillor Graham asked the following supplementary question:

I refer to a study from Cardiff University reported in today's Guardian that local welfare support has become a pressing issue and named Authorities like North Tyneside, led by our Mayor Norma Redfearn, and Islington who are bucking the trend and investing in welfare support.

Can the Deputy Mayor explain what the fund was spent on this year and what it will be spent on next year?

Councillor B Pickard responded as follows:

The poverty intervention fund this year has funded the following projects:

Poverty Proofing the school day - working with Children North East we have been pleased to offer every school the opportunity to take part in this project. Working through schools, it seeks to better understand what child poverty looks like from a child and young person's perspective. Each school involved is fully supported to be able to put in place an action plan to alleviate this in their setting and to reduce the stigma and discrimination faced by children who live in poverty.

Benefits take-up campaign and support - Citizens Advice and Age UK have advised that the impacts of living in poverty for some individuals and families is compounded by people not taking up their full entitlement to benefits. This is recognised in particular for older people (and especially for older people with disabilities) who often struggle to navigate the often-complex system of benefits and allowances or for whom the digital nature of benefits administration and claiming processes are not always easy to access.

Funding has enabled both these organisations to support older residents to access those benefits as well as getting the best deals on their utilities but also to ensure they don't become victims of scams which is ever increasing.

In December alone, the CAB was able to support the bringing in of £24,830 for 5 residents with an expected £50,788 for another 18. They tell us their December which is usually quiet was as busy as last March. Funding has been vital to support this money that our residents are entitled to come into the Borough.

School appropriate clothing - we are pleased to have been able to provide every child in the Borough who is on free school meals with vouchers for both uniform suppliers and local supermarkets to the value of £45. This has given parents the dignity and choice to purchase what they need.

Holiday food programme and our Hot food for older people. I'm proud that we have been acknowledged as one of the two councils both Labour controlled that have increased local welfare funding. To us poverty is not a forgotten policy area and the poverty intervention fund complements the Council's spending on the welfare of our residents.