

Local Government Act 1972

Borough of North Tyneside

Thursday, 23 September 2021

At the meeting of the Council of the Borough of North Tyneside duly convened and held on Thursday, 23 September 2021 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 P Oliver (Deputy Chair) (In the Chair)
N Redfearn (Elected Mayor)

Councillor L Arkley	Councillor K Barrie
Councillor L Bartoli	Councillor G Bell
Councillor L Bell	Councillor L Bones
Councillor T Brady	Councillor S Brockbank
Councillor J Cassidy	Councillor K Clark
Councillor D Cox	Councillor S Cox
Councillor J Cruddas	Councillor E Darke
Councillor L Darke	Councillor C Davis
Councillor P Earley	Councillor S Graham
Councillor M Green	Councillor J Harrison
Councillor T Hallway	Councillor John Hunter
Councillor C Johnson	Councillor H Johnson
Councillor C Johnston	Councillor J Kirwin
Councillor F Lott	Councillor W Lott
Councillor G Madden	Councillor M Madden
Councillor P McIntyre	Councillor T Mulvenna
Councillor J Mole	Councillor J Montague
Councillor A Newman	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 Shaw
Councillor J Stirling	Councillor M Thirlaway
Councillor J Walker	Councillor Westwater
	Councillor M Wilson

Apologies: Councillor B Burdis, Councillor C Burdis, Councillor N Craven, Councillor D Drummond, Councillor Janet Hunter, Councillor A McMullen, Councillor M Hall and Councillor J Wallace

C31/20 To receive any Declarations of Interest

Declarations of interest were reported as follows:

Councillor G Bell – Item 5 – Motion 2 - non-registerable personal interest as he is a military veteran.

Councillor G Bell – Item 5 – Motion 2 - registerable personal interest as he works for a veteran's charity and a Director of Veterans Community Interest Company.

Councillor K Clark – Item 6 – Council Plan Refresh - registerable personal interest as she is employed by Justice Prince and is a Director of Justice Prince Community Interest Company.

Councillor J Cruddas – Item 6 – Council Plan Refresh - registerable personal interest as she is employed by Justice Prince and is a Director of Justice Prince Community Interest Company.

Councillor John Hunter – Item 6 – Council Plan Refresh - non-registerable personal interest as he is a trustee of the Wallsend Memorial Hall.

Councillor G Madden – Item 5 – Motion 1 - non-registerable personal interest as he has involvement with the Walking With Project.

Councillor G Madden – Item 6 – Council Plan Refresh - non-registerable personal interest as he is a trustee of the Wallsend Memorial Hall.

Councillor M Madden – Item 6 – Council Plan Refresh - non-registerable personal interest as she is a trustee of the Wallsend Memorial Hall.

Councillor A Newman – Item 5 – Motion 2 - non-registerable personal interest as he is a military veteran.

Councillor M Thirlaway – Item 5 – Motion 3 - non-registerable personal interest as he is employed by a social care provider.

Councillor P Oliver – Item 5 – Motion 3 – non-registerable personal interest as she has a family member who receives social care from the Authority.

C32/20 Minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2021

Resolved that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 22 July 2021 be taken as read, confirmed and signed by the Chair.

C33/20 Return of Councillor Elected - Camperdown Ward By-Election 9 September 2021

The Council received the return of the Councillor elected for the Camperdown Ward following the by-election held on 9 September 2021.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Tracy Hallway to the Council.

C34/20 Motions 1 - North Tyneside Council - support for refugees and service personnel.

It was moved by Councillor S Brockbank and seconded by Councillor L Bartoli that:

The horror of the Taliban taking over Afghanistan remains writ large in all our minds – and rightly so.

The oppression of groups ranging from women to other faith groups, from the LGBTQ community to those who have served the people in a military role, is a human crisis. There are many differing views as to whether it was right to withdraw from this troubled theatre of war, but as local politicians it is incumbent on us to ensure that North Tyneside Council has made all preparations to welcome those who have been assessed by Her Majesty's Government as needing our protection and ensure that they have access to services.

Equally, the impact on the heroic service personnel who have protected and, in sad cases, died for the cause of freedom in Afghanistan must be considered and the Council must ensure that the bravery shown is reflected in the speed and quality of the service that our military can expect.

We call on the Elected Mayor and Cabinet to:

1. Re-assure Council and residents that all preparations have been made to accommodate refugees.
2. Re-assure Council that service personnel will be at the front of any queue of service provision.
3. Provide Council with a clear plan as to how arrangements will be monitored and reviewed.

An amendment was moved by Councillor A Newman and seconded by Councillor W Samuel as follows:

Delete the following wording in the second paragraph:

“but as local politicians it is incumbent on us to ensure that North Tyneside Council has made all preparations to welcome those who have been assessed by Her Majesty's Government as needing our protection and ensure that they have access to services”.

And replace with

“The United Kingdom made several promises to the people of Afghanistan chief among them is that we would not abandon them, this Council believes that the Government has not gone far enough in assessing those who assisted the British and allied mission in Afghanistan. As well as those already assessed by the Government, we believe the Government has a moral duty to evacuate and offer asylum to the many interpreters, their families and many others that worked with us, many of whom have been left behind”.

Reword bullet point 2 by the deletion of the wording:

“at the front of any queue of service provision”.

Being replaced by:

“given the appropriate priority in terms of service provision”.

And the addition of a further bullet point 4:

4. “Write to the Home Secretary to:
 - Outline our concerns about the thousands of eligible Afghan nationals and British citizens left behind in Afghanistan.
 - Confirm our support to evacuate as many of those eligible to be evacuated by any means possible.
 - Ask the Home Secretary to detail funding and initiatives that will be set up to aid with the resettlement of Afghan refugees.
 - Ask the Home Secretary to grant immediate asylum status to those Afghan nationals already in the UK and expand the family reunion route”.

The amendment, on being put to the meeting, was approved by 43 votes to 5 votes.

The motion, as amended, on being put to the meeting, was approved by 43 votes to 0 votes, with 7 abstentions.

C35/20 Motion 2 - Veteran Support

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

North Tyneside Council notes:

- Veterans’ mental health continues to be an issue with many veterans suffering from a number of complex issues including PTSD.
- Local authorities are often best placed to give aid to the armed forces community living in their areas.
- North Tyneside Council has an excellent record of pioneering initiatives to support our armed forces community, however without dedicated funding the Authority is limited in what it can provide.

North Tyneside Council calls upon the Mayor to:

write to both the Chancellor Rishi Sunak and the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs Leo Docherty to request that they supply ringfenced funding to help support local services dedicated to our armed forces personnel.

The motion, on being put to the meeting, was approved by 50 votes to 0 votes.

C36/20 Motion 3 - Social Care Spending

It was moved by Councillor W Samuel and seconded by Councillor J Kirwin that:

Council notes:

- Social care spending nationally currently accounts for nearly half of all spending in councils nationally.
- The Conservative Government has cut over £127 million from North Tyneside

Council's budget and transferred responsibility for paying for social care to local residents and businesses. With the council tax rises in the past few years being as a result and mainly made up of the social care precept.

- Government contribution to council spending has gone down from 50% to 10% in the past 8 years with the Government instead placing the burden on residents and businesses.
- Nationally the Conservatives have left 1.6 million elderly and disabled people without the help they need.

North Tyneside Council believes:

- The Government's 'plan' for social care would force the burden for paying onto the low paid and young working population.
- The Conservative Government's plan would result in a tax on jobs through employers' NI contribution.
- The plan hammers those low paid working in social care at the same time as facing a cut in Universal Credit, they'll also face the biggest burden from the national insurance increase while the Government once again fails to improve their often poor terms and conditions.

North Tyneside Council calls upon the Mayor to:

- Write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to raise the funds via taxes or other routes which share the burden more equitably across society and fairly reflect ability to pay.

An amendment was moved by Councillor S Brockbank and seconded by Councillor G Westwater as follows:

Under Council notes, in the second bullet point, delete the wording after 'The Conservative Government' and replace with:

"is committed to taking the difficult decisions and tackling these problems head on, creating a sustainable adult care system that is fit for the future."

Delete the third and fourth bullet points and replace with:

- An extra £36 billion will be invested in the health and care system over the next three years, including £5.4 billion in adult social care, to ensure it has the resources it needs to recover from the pandemic. In order to fund such a significant increase in permanent spending, the Government has had to make the tough but responsible choice to increase taxes. A new 1.25 per cent dedicated Health and Social Care Levy, based on National Insurance Contributions, is being introduced.
- There are further proposals to follow on tackling the Social Care issues later this year.

Delete the wording after 'North Tyneside Council believes' and replace with:

- The Conservative Government has taken decisive action to deliver the funding that the NHS needs to get back on its feet after the pandemic, and a long-term funding plan for our social care system which has been neglected by parties of both sides for

decades.

Delete the wording after 'North Tyneside Council calls upon the Mayor to' and replace with:

- Write to the Prime Minister to welcome that a sustainable long-term plan for social care has now been put in place.
- Write to the Leader of the Labour Party to ask him to support the Prime Minister's sustainable plan for the future of social care so this issue can finally stop being a political football.

The Council was advised that the amendment could not be considered in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12(8) as it would have the effect of negating the Motion.

The Motion, on being put to the meeting, was approved by 43 votes to 7 votes.

C37/20 Motion 4 - Universal Credit

It was moved by Councillor H Johnson and seconded by Councillor C Johnson that:

North Tyneside Council notes that:

- The process of bringing in Universal Credit under a Tory government has been chaotic and confusing for the residents of North Tyneside.
- That the increase of £20 to Universal Credit since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic has helped the poorest residents in North Tyneside.
- Almost 40% of Universal Credit claimants are in work.

North Tyneside Council believes that:

- The Government should listen to calls from the Labour Party to stop these plans and make the £20 uplift to Universal Credit permanent.
- Some of the poorest residents in North Tyneside will be the most affected by these changes, leaving many unable to afford to eat or heat their homes over winter.
- These changes will lead to an increase in the use of food banks as families struggle to afford food.

North Tyneside Council calls upon the Mayor to:

- Write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions asking them to reconsider these changes given the effect they will have on residents in North Tyneside.
- Call on the Government to listen to the Labour Party and other organisations and make the £20 uplift to Universal Credit permanent.

The motion, on being put to the meeting, was approved by 43 votes to 8 votes.

C38/20 Council Plan Refresh

Council received a report that sought approval to the updated Our North Tyneside Council Plan, in light of the findings from engagement with residents and other key stakeholders.

It was moved by Councillor C Johnson and seconded by the Elected Mayor that:

Council approves the updated Our North Tyneside Council Plan, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

The Motion, on being put to the meeting, was approved by 43 votes to 0 votes, with 8 abstentions.

C39/20 Chair's Announcements

The Deputy Chair informed Members of two recent events that she had attended in which she handed out dancing medals to children at Marden Residents Centre and laid a wreath at the War Memorial at the Links to commemorate the anniversary of the Battle of Britain.

C40/20 Elected Mayor's Announcements

In her announcements the Elected Mayor stated how delighted she was that the North Tyneside's Youth Justice Service had been rated 'outstanding' by Government inspectors. The Council were rated outstanding for both social care and the youth justice service.

The Elected Mayor praised and paid tribute the Council's youth justice worker Justin Laidler who had received a Police commendation for his work with young people which had been described as both inspirational and life changing.

In addition, the Elected Mayor informed the Chamber that the Council's Children's Services team had won an award in the Workforce Transformation category at the Municipal Journal Awards 2021, which recognised excellence in local government services.

The Elected Mayor highlighted the activity programme that had taken place over the summer, providing activities for youth people to be healthy and active. Nearly 1400 children had accessed the sessions provided, which included both indoor and outdoor activity. The programme had received positive feedback from parents' and carers.

The Elected Mayor stated that the Council was aware of residents' continued concern about the condition of the boroughs roads and pavements and gave assurance that this continued to be a priority for the Council. She stated that although there had been a 30% cut in Central Government funding there would be continued investment of £2m per year through the Council budget to carry out repairs.

The Elected Mayor informed of the success of the recent free festival celebrating North Tyneside's cultural diversity that had been organised by the Borough's BAME residents and had taken place in Northumberland Square, North Shields in September. This was the first event of this kind in the Borough and the Council would support the BAME community to support arrangements for the next event.

In concluding her announcements, the Elected Mayor informed the Council Chamber of the retirement of Dave Brown, Senior Manager Democratic and Electoral Services. She thanked him for his loyal service to the Authority and wished him well for the future.

C41/20 Questions by Members of the Council

1. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor Karen Clark

The Social Metrics Commission reported that 4.5 million people are experiencing the deepest levels of poverty in the UK. Can the Mayor confirm North Tyneside Council fully supports the North of Tyne poverty truth commission?

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

First of all it's absolutely shocking that 4.5 million people are experiencing the deepest level of poverty in this country. One of the proudest things the last labour government did was take millions of children out of poverty.

I'm sure working with our North of Tyne Cabinet colleagues and officer team though we are proud to be developing the North of Tyne Poverty Commission and of course myself and Mayor Redfearn will be doing everything we can to support it.

Here in North Tyneside we work hard to support our residents who are living in poverty or are struggling with daily living costs. One of our recent policy decisions was the Poverty Intervention Fund to provide practical help to alleviate the financial, health and social impacts of poverty on our residents.

As Members know we started this project by listening to a range of people to ensure we were developing what would make the biggest impact on those living in poverty.

The projects funded have ranged from supporting children and families with school clothing to working with our older residents to ensure that they have access to the benefits they are entitled to. The fund is also supporting all our schools to go through the Poverty Proofing the School Day to make sure no child is disadvantaged when going to school.

In total the project has, so far, helped over 5,000 families.

But you know I am also worried about the impact of the pandemic in inequalities in the Borough. That is why the Mayor's manifesto and our new Council Plan commits us to tackling those inequalities.

Our new Health and Wellbeing Strategy will look at what we know about inequality in the borough and add to what we have learned about the impact of the pandemic on those most vulnerable in our Borough. We know it has widened the gap and that we have to act.

We are using the Marmot policy objectives to shape our work so that we know our approach is rooted in evidence of what works. And we also know we will need help from all of our partners.

That is why The State of the Area event this year is an opportunity to talk to our residents and our partners from the Voluntary Community Sector, businesses, and other public bodies about inequalities in the borough and what they think we should be doing about them.

All the work going on in North Tyneside shows that we support the inclusion of stakeholders in these key conversations and is at the heart of what we are doing, so we support the North of Tyne Poverty Truth Commission's work.

Councillor K Clark asked the following supplementary question:

We know North Tyneside Council is fully committed to reducing poverty and inequalities. Will the Mayor ensure North Tyneside Council assists the poverty truth commission in hearing from as many as our residents as possible?

Councillor C Johnson responded as follows:

As mentioned, we have already undertaken a lot of work to involve our residents in the development of our policies and particularly in reducing poverty and inequalities. I am confident that officers will work closely with Children North East who were awarded the contract to run the Poverty Truth Commission to ensure that as many of our residents as possible are given the opportunity to be heard.

2. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor Andy Newman

Will the Mayor join me as the Armed forces champion for North Tyneside Council in raising the concerns of the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan with HM Government and will she also write to the Home Secretary outlining our support for the evacuation of British citizens and those who assisted Allied forces in Afghanistan?

The Elected Mayor responded as follows:

I welcome your concerns regarding the current tragic situation in Afghanistan.

As a council with a proud tradition of supporting people who have been displaced and dispossessed, we have pledged to do whatever we can to support the Government's Afghan resettlement scheme. The scheme is being managed by the Home Office and the North East Migration Partnership (NEMP), and I will ensure that officers, myself and the Cabinet will work with NEMP who will co-ordinate our response to support families that are allocated homes in North Tyneside. We are working to identify suitable homes for three families. I, therefore, feel I do not need to write to the Home Secretary as we are engaging direct to the Government through NEMP.

For the families who arrive from Afghanistan, we will work with our partners and council colleagues to ensure a wider package of support is in place, so they can settle here as quickly as possible and have access to local services.

It is difficult to imagine how traumatic it must be to leave everything behind and seek refuge in a country almost 4,000 miles away. It is vitally important that these people are treated with kindness and compassion wherever they are resettled in the world - and I am confident they will find that here in North Tyneside.

3. Question to the Elected Mayor by Councillor Linda Arkley

The Cabinet approved an ambitious plan to transform North Shields and the Fish Quay on Monday 25th January 2021.

It outlined eight separate projects for the town centre and Fish Quay. These include enhancing the appearance of key areas, creating a new transport hub, and interchange and town square to host various events, a new cultural quarter based around Howard Street and Riverside walkway linking the town centre to the Fish Quay.

There are also proposals for high-quality housing at key locations and moving the North Shields ferry to Western Quay.

Cabinet approved the next steps to: -

- Refining a Delivery Plan for the masterplan which will set out the timing and funding of the projects contained in the masterplan.
- Progress the delivery of those schemes contained in the masterplan for which there is funding has been secured.
- Securing external funding for those elements of the masterplan for which funding is not currently in place.

Would the Elected Mayor provide the Council with an update on all aspects of the North Shields Masterplan?

Would she also provide a financial break down of grants, funding, sales, investment received and is there a shortfall of funding for the North Shields Master plan?

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

I am genuinely grateful for the question and to share with Members the great progress we, and partners, are making in delivering our Master Plan for North Shields. The regeneration of our town centres is a priority for the Council given the changing nature of retailing trends in the UK which have been exacerbated by the Covid 19 pandemic.

The North Shields Master Plan provides a series of projects which will have a significant impact on the appearance and economic activity in the town by providing an enhanced visitor experience. The Master Plan will also create the right environment for private sector investment in properties and businesses as well as giving confidence to funding partners.

Of the Council led elements of the Master Plan, the Authority has committed over £4m to the programme. We also expect to secure in the region of £42m of external funding to deliver projects identified either directly by the Authority, or with our partners. There are further funding bids in development including proposals for the development of the cultural quarter. Overall, the Masterplan includes 8 projects, 7 of which are underway or being designed.

So far, we have made excellent progress investing over £5.5m in delivering some key schemes that have already made a significant impact on the town centre. We have successfully brought the former Council Offices in Northumberland Square back to life as high quality family housing. This has seen the refurbishment of the listed Georgian buildings as well as new build housing. Bringing in new residents to live in the town centre will help support our local shops and services.

Building on this success, we have also acquired and demolished Unicorn House, an unattractive and vacant office building, and are now ready to build new family homes and continue to bring people to live in the town centre.

Shortly, we will also start work on a multi-million pound investment in Northumberland Square and Howard Street. This will, in partnership with Historic England, create attractive pedestrian areas and will reduce the dominance of vehicles in the town centre. It will enhance the visitor experience and will create opportunities for outdoor seating to help develop the town's growing leisure economy. The Wooden Doll has already been restored and returned to Northumberland Square.

Improving how people move into and around the town and creating safe accessible routes for visitors also forms part of the Master Plan. We are currently finalising plans to develop a new transport hub which will provide better transport facilities. The Master Plan also includes a new town square, creating an exciting space for town centre activities such as markets and performances.

I hope colleagues will join me in recognising the progress made to date in delivering elements of the Master Plan. However, in order to do this work justice, I will provide a note for all Members.

Councillor L Arkley asked the following supplementary question:

A lot of people don't understand what the Council are doing in North Shields and the effect it will have on them. Would the Mayor consider establishing a working group for the Councillors in Preston, Tynemouth, Riverside and Chirton to work alongside and know what's going on to enable them to give the information to residents.

The Elected Mayor addressed the Chamber stating that the Council had never tried to be secretive about anything it did, it had always been open and carried out consultations and she felt sure the Cabinet Member for Regeneration would consider the suggestion.

Councillor C Johnson responded as follows:

We had wide ranging consultation with Ward Members and residents in North Shields when our Masterplan was being produced and we altered elements of the Masterplan on the basis of the consultation with residents. Residents have been engaged throughout this process and will continue to be engaged. Ward Members will continue to be engaged as well. The Masterplan is there for everyone to see and it's a great plan for North Shields, it is coming together and we will consider the request.