

North Tyneside Council

Report to Council

23 January 2025

Title: Questions by Members of the Public

Notice has been received of the following questions from members of the public to be put to the Council meeting.

1. Question to the Elected Mayor 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 ten percent 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?

2. Question to the Elected Mayor from A Stenning of 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 9th January 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)?

3. Question to the Elected Mayor from C Kirkham of 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?

4. Question to the Elected Mayor from C Davis of 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.

5. Question to the Elected Mayor from H Smith of Tynemouth

A decision was reached at a public enquiry 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 enquiry has funding been allotted from the budget to ensure that repair works will commence soon.

6. Question to the Elected Mayor from S Hill of 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 life long learning.