

North Tyneside Council

Report to Council

26 November 2020

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 Mr Maier

I understand that, following consultation with some local businesses, voluntary sector and residents through Stakeholder Workshops earlier this year, the Carbon Trust has prepared an Action Plan for North Tyneside in response to the Climate Emergency.

From the last Council meeting it has voted to implement only limited policies arising from the Action Plan, with a mandate for Officers to develop business cases for further actions *as deemed appropriate*. There is a real danger that momentum is lost. Given the significant and wide ranging work set out in the report action clearly needs to be immediate and comprehensive.

Will you commit to implementing the Action Plan, as recommended by the Carbon Trust, in full - and if not, why not. Given that failure to implement the plan will mean missing the binding 2050 target.

2. Question to the Elected Mayor from Mr Christie

Under the Tranche 2 funding of the Emergency Active Travel Fund, councils are expected to adhere to the Cycling Infrastructure Design Guidance.

All funding that North Tyneside Council will be requesting will have to ensure that all schemes meet the LTN 1/20 guidance, otherwise no funding will be granted, and this will have further impacts later down the line.

As North Tyneside Council has made a commitment to the Climate Emergency and Active Transport, in spite of the early removing of the Tranche 1 schemes, please can you advise how North Tyneside council will comply with LTN 1/20 and what that will look like.

3. Question to the Elected Mayor from Ms Hawkins

What active steps has the Council taken to reduce car use in the borough - to lower greenhouse gas emissions as well as reduce air pollution and encourage walking and cycling - since their Declaration of a Climate Emergency, such that they feel the Sunrise Cycleway is now surplus to requirements?

4. Question to the Elected Mayor from Ms Remfry

I understand that the Carbon Trust was commissioned by North Tyneside to develop its Climate Emergency Action Plan to move towards a carbon neutral borough by 2050 and it has now produced its report.

Does the Council fully support this Action Plan and intend to implement all its recommendations?

5. Question to the Elected Mayor from Ms Erskine

I understand that, following consultation with some local businesses, voluntary sector and residents through Stakeholder Workshops earlier this year, the Carbon Trust has prepared an Action Plan for North Tyneside in response to the Climate Emergency.

I also understand that the Cabinet has voted to implement limited policies arising from the Action Plan, with a mandate for Officers to develop business cases for further actions as deemed appropriate.

Will you commit to implementing the Action Plan, as recommended by the Carbon Trust, in full - and if not, why not (given the taxpayer money given to the Carbon Trust to prepare the recommendations).

6. Question to the Elected Mayor from North Tyneside Green Party

We understand that, following consultation with local businesses, voluntary sector and residents through Stakeholder Workshops earlier this year, the Carbon Trust has prepared an Action Plan for North Tyneside in response to the Climate Emergency.

We also understand that the Cabinet has voted to implement limited policies arising from the Action Plan, with a mandate for Officers to develop business cases for further actions as deemed appropriate.

Will you commit to implementing the Action Plan, as recommended by the Carbon Trust, in full - and if not, why not (given the taxpayer money given to the Carbon Trust to prepare the recommendations).

7. Question to the Elected Mayor from Mr Percival

I understand that an Action Plan has been prepared for North Tyneside in response to the Climate Emergency. Will you commit to implementing the Action Plan, as recommended by the Carbon Trust, in full – and can you also clarify the process and next steps for setting detailed pathways, actions, budgets and timescales?

8. Question to the Elected Mayor from Mr Appleby

I understand that, following consultation with some local businesses, voluntary sector and residents through Stakeholder Workshops earlier this year, the Carbon Trust has prepared an Action Plan for North Tyneside in response to the Climate Emergency.

I also understand that the Cabinet has voted to implement limited policies arising from the Action Plan, with a mandate for Officers to develop business cases for further actions as deemed appropriate.

Will you commit to implementing the Action Plan, as recommended by the Carbon Trust, in full - and if not, why not (given the taxpayer money given to the Carbon Trust to prepare the recommendations).

9. Question to the Elected Mayor from Mr Whalley

I am a resident in North Tyneside, and have worked locally in the NHS full-time for over thirty years.

You are, of course, aware that lucrative contracts are awarded to private businesses and corporations for services that previously would have been provided in-house by the NHS. It is clear to us all that, very sadly, the privatisation of the NHS has been steadily increasing throughout the past decade and it is certainly a trend that I have witnessed as a clinician in the NHS.

The ideologically-driven privatisation process often starts life rather innocuously and softly as a local one-off time-limited pilot or trial project with claims that the initiative is an "additional" service thus negating the need for public consultation. Following the pilot period, an inadequate evaluation and a glossy CCG presentation often serve to embed the private service more and more within our healthcare. The process is then wrapped up and masked by the privatised service being allowed to use and hide behind the trusted NHS logo.

You will also be aware that North Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group recently commissioned a private company, Livi, to provide virtual Primary Care appointments to North Tyneside residents. Livi is an international digital healthcare company. This privatisation was sweetened by the CCG introducing it as a short term pilot scheme but, as stated, the medium term dangers are both obvious and very significant.

In addition to this fundamental fact that **North Tyneside CCG should not be running down the NHS and putting healthcare into the hands of profit-making companies with shareholders**, there exist a number of operational difficulties. These include important issues such as

- **poor continuity** - it would be exceptional if a patient spoke to the same Livi GP more than once
- **a lack of local knowledge** - collaboration with local organisations and involvement in local systems of care are key features of work in Primary Care but Livi GPs, communicating with North Tyneside patients from across the whole of the UK, don't have a real life working knowledge of North Tyneside resources and systems
- **practical difficulties associated with virtual assessments** – for example, for those needing a physical examination, or for people with mental health problems

- **increased health inequality** – more vulnerable and older people are less likely to be using smartphones and ipads, and are also less likely to have access to broadband, spare minutes and data

- Looking at the bigger picture, the bottleneck in Primary Care is time – there are not enough GPs. **This system takes more and more GPs out of local mainstream General Practice** and locates them in virtual quick fix systems of dubious quality. One of the masked costs of privatisation is workforce shortage for the NHS, as private companies recruit NHS doctors. They are not "Add-ons" – they are "Takeaways" from our National Health Service.

I understand that the CCG failed to discuss this pilot scheme with North Tyneside councillors. This is not acceptable.

I am sure that you will agree that the fundamental issue relates to privatisation, and the fact that North Tyneside CCG chose to invest in an international healthcare company rather than our own local existing Primary Care Networks in North Tyneside.

When considering this issue, many people misguidedly quote an old counterargument by stating that *"our General Practices are themselves privatised, so what is the problem?"* but, believe me, there is a world of difference between hardworking GP partners in a localised Primary Care team and an international company, with a board of directors and with shareholders creaming off profits. The majority of GPs work to NHS contracts, follow NHS guidelines and see NHS patients. They do not compete for patients, or profit in the way competitive providers of healthcare do.

Likewise, some people will use the argument that the infrastructure and workforce is not present – but I say that we need to be proactive in expanding our NHS to carry out such health-related work; North Tyneside CCG should be using these finances to invest in, and enable and support local GPs to manage the service. It is both shocking and a disgrace that North Tyneside CCG chose to go down this insidious privatisation route.

Finally, the pilot will be evaluated in a few months time by the CCG, and the methodology typically used by the CCG is a matter of concern – I anticipate a superficial quantitative report on usage, response times, clinical presentation and outcomes, plus an attempt at a qualitative analysis using, perhaps, a carefully worded questionnaire, client satisfaction survey or direct quotes. There is a distinct lack of focus on the bigger picture – a lack of attention to a person's principles and values about whether the service should be a privatised business initiative or whether it should be provided in-house through a publicly accountable, publicly funded, publicly provided National Health Service. This is a crucial issue to consider as it will, of course, impact on our access to health services in years to come. This fundamental issue needs to be an important component of any evaluation.

My question to North Tyneside Council:

Given that North Tyneside Council is jointly responsible with the CCG for local health and social care provision under the terms of the "Integrated Care System", what will your involvement be regarding an evaluation of this service, and how will you ensure that a full and comprehensive review takes place?