

North Tyneside Council

Report to Council

22 July 2021

Title: Motions

Notice has been received of the following motions from Members of the Council to be put to the Council meeting.

1. Motion signed by Councillors J Wallace, P McIntyre and S Brockbank

In June last year, Mrs Rose Paterson took her own life, a tragic loss. Suicide is a preventable death and the Rose Paterson Trust, established in her honour, is encouraging everyone to undergo a 30 minute online suicide awareness course.

It aims to provide a better understanding of the signs to watch for and the skills needed to approach someone who may be struggling, whether through social isolation or suicidal thoughts. It aims to give people the skills and confidence to help someone who may be considering suicide.

The free course is available on the website zerosuicidealliance.com

We ask the Council to provide an opportunity in work hours for all members of staff to take this training, so that, should it be necessary, they may be able to help fellow officers, family, friends and members of the public.

Financial Implications:

There are indirect financial implications arising from this motion in the use of staff time

Legal Implications:

There are no direct legal implications arising from this motion.

2. Motion signed by Councillors K Barrie, C Johnston and L Bones

Pavements and pothole repairs are some of the most commonly raised issues with local councillors. All councillors will know how dangerous broken pavements and potholes can be to pedestrians, cyclists and motorists alike.

North Tyneside Council recently received a £1.8 Million funding boost from Central Government to fix potholes across the borough. The funding is intended to fix existing potholes but will also be available for local authorities to undertake longer term road resurfacing work to prevent potholes from appearing in the first place.

North Tyneside Council currently hold over £67 Million in reserves, of which £20 Million are not ring fenced. With potholes across the borough worsening and pavement repairs being put on hold, Council asks the Mayor to set up an emergency pavement and pothole repair fund, match funding Central Government's contribution,

therefore ensuring North Tyneside get back on top of our crumbling roads and pavements.

Financial Implications:

There are direct financial implications resulting from this motion.

The Reserves of £66.9m includes all Reserves, including School Balances, General Fund Balances and a number of earmarked reserves. Earmarked reserves are for specific purposes for example grant reserves with specific spending condition, and PFI reserves for managing the profiling of the PFI grant over the life of the contract. Un-earmarked reserves include the Strategic Reserve of close to £14.5million as at 1 April 2021, and the Change Reserve at £4.7m as at 1 April 2021. These are low levels of reserves (3.67%) for an organisation with gross revenue expenditure of over £600 million.

As described in the response to this motion the Authority has received £1.8m to support the ongoing programme of works to improve our roads and pavements. However, the Authority have had to make up the shortfall of nearly £0.700m of grant funding in relation to the reduction that has been seen in the LTP grant. In February the Council set its budget including the Investment Plan, investing a further £2m in highways. This motion would require an unplanned use of reserves which would impact on the Authority's ability to deliver the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

The Authority continues to face significant financial risks, increased by the on-going impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic and the CFO would not recommend the use of reserves for this purpose.

Legal Implications:

The Council is required to maintain reserves to a level considered appropriate by the officer appointed under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972. In the event that reserves are utilised to a point that the Section 151 Officer no longer considered them adequate, it may be necessary to issue a notice under Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 to ensure the Council did not overspend its available resources. Failure to ensure the Council acts within its resources would be ultra vires.

3. Motion signed by Councillors S Brockbank, L Bones and L Bartoli

Since his election, the Prime Minister has forged ahead with his pledge to recruit more police officers, with an ambitious target of 20,000. Additionally, the Home Office has accepted the recommendations of an independent panel to increase the starting salary of the constables, to make the force an attractive career option.

During lockdown, we have seen reports from residents in North Tyneside relating to anti-social behaviour in a range of our communities, with the key question being asked: When will the PCC allocate more of the available resources to our non-urban policing priorities?

Keeping citizens safe is the first priority of government and ensuring residents get a good deal in North Tyneside, should be the first priority of this Council.

We call upon the Elected Mayor to write to the PCC and request, as a matter of urgency, that she allocated more constables to our area to meet the need which is clearly evident.

Financial Implications:

There are no direct financial implications arising from this motion.

Legal Implications:

There are no direct legal implications arising from this motion.

4. Motion signed by Councillors M Wilson, P Richardson and C Burdis

North Tyneside Council notes that:

1. The pressure on organisations to pay the right amount of tax in the right place at the right time has never been stronger.

2. Polling from the Institute for Business Ethics finds that “corporate tax avoidance” has, since 2013, been the clear number one concern of the British public when it comes to business conduct.

3. Almost two-thirds (63%) of the public agree that the Government and local councils should consider a company’s ethics and how they pay their tax as well as value for money and quality of service provided, when undertaking procurement.

4. Around 17.5% of public contracts in the UK have been won by companies with links to tax havens.

5. It has been conservatively estimated that losses from multinational profit-shifting (just one form of tax avoidance) could be costing the UK some £7bn per annum in lost corporation tax revenues.

6. The Fair Tax Mark offers a means for business to demonstrate good tax conduct, and has been secured by organisations with a combined annual income of £50bn and more than 6,500 outlets and premises, including many social enterprises and co-operatives.

North Tyneside Council believes that:

1. Taxes are very important in ensuring that public services are paid for.

2. Tax enables us to provide services from education, health and social care, to flood defence, roads, policing and defence. It also helps to counter financial inequalities and rebalance distorted economies.

3. As recipients of significant public funding, local authorities should take the lead in the promotion of exemplary tax conduct; be that by ensuring contractors are paying their proper share of tax, or by refusing to go along with offshore tax dodging when buying land and property.

4. Where substantive stakes are held in private enterprises, then influence should be wielded to ensure that such businesses are exemplars of tax transparency and tax avoidance is shunned - e.g., no use of marketed schemes requiring disclosure under DOTAS regulations (Disclosure Of Tax Avoidance Schemes) or arrangements that might fall foul of the General Anti-Abuse Rule.

5. More action is needed, however, current law significantly restricts councils' ability to either penalise poor tax conduct or reward good tax conduct, when buying goods or services.

6. UK cities, counties and towns can and should stand up for responsible tax conduct - doing what they can within existing frameworks and pledging to do more given the opportunity, as active supporters of international tax justice.

North Tyneside Council Calls upon the Mayor to:

1. Approve the Councils for Fair Tax Declaration.

2. Continue to ensure contractors implement IR35 robustly and pay a fair share of employment taxes.

3. Not use offshore vehicles for the purchase of land and property, especially where this leads to reduced payments of stamp duty.

4. Undertake due diligence to ensure that not-for-profit structures are not being used inappropriately as an artificial device to reduce the payment of tax and business rates.

5. Demand clarity on the ultimate beneficial ownership of suppliers and their consolidated profit & loss position.

6. Promote Fair Tax Mark certification for any business in which we have a significant stake and where corporation tax is due.

7. Support Fair Tax Week events in the area and celebrate the tax contribution made by responsible businesses who say what they pay with pride.

8. Support calls for urgent reform of EU and UK law to enable local authorities to better penalise poor tax conduct and reward good tax conduct through their procurement policies.

Financial Implications:

There are no direct financial implications arising from this motion.

Legal Implications:

The Council will undertake suitable due diligence in its contractual dealings to ensure compliance with all legal requirements.

5. Motion signed by Councillors E Parker-Leonard, A Newman and C Johnson

North Tyneside Council Notes:

- A ban on evictions was introduced to protect renters from the effects of the pandemic.
- The temporary ban on bailiff-enforced evictions introduced in March 2020 and has been extended several times since it started. On the 31st May 2021 the ban on evictions has been lifted.
- A recent survey commissioned by The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) and conducted by YouGov, reveals clear warning signs that point to a spike in evictions and homelessness as the ban lifts.
- There are 400,000 households already expecting to be evicted currently.
- In addition 450,000 households are currently in arrears with rent.
- Almost a fifth of this group (18%) have been in arrears for more than four months (meaning landlords in England will only be required to give four weeks' notice of eviction now that the ban has been lifted).

North Tyneside Council Believes:

- We believe that unless further support is provided to help those facing eviction, such as grants or interest-free loans from the government to help pay off rent arrears, hundreds of thousands of private renters will be at risk of homelessness. As we head into the autumn, this situation could become even more acute.
- JRF is calling for a targeted package of grants to support renters in arrears, administered through the existing Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) system. The £180m currently available through DHPs this year is nowhere near sufficient to support the 450,000 renters in arrears. A boost to DHP payments, together with improved guidance and ring-fenced funding for arrears, would be sufficient to re-set the housing market and enable renters to recover economically at pace with the rest of the country.
- The Local Government Association (LGA), charities and Labour are uniting to call on ministers to fulfil a manifesto commitment to end “no-fault evictions”, which allow landlords to evict tenants without giving a reason.

North Tyneside Council call upon the Mayor to take the following actions to reduce the effect on the most vulnerable in our society.

- To write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Robert Jenrick MP.
- To call for his support with the JRF's suggestions regarding DHP funding as stated above.

- To call for the government to issue interest free loans to be introduced for renters to help pay off arrears.
- To call for the government to act on its 2019 commitment to end Section 21 eviction powers which enables no fault evictions.

Financial Implications:

There are no direct financial implications arising from this motion.

Legal Implications:

There are no direct legal implications arising from this motion.