

Council

A meeting of Council was held on Wednesday, 20th January, 2016.

Present: The Worshipful the Mayor (Cllr Ian Dalgarno); Cllr Helen Atkinson, Cllr Sonia Bailey, Cllr Paul Baker, Cllr Chris Barlow, Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Derrick Brown, Cllr Julia Cherrett, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Chris Clough, Cllr Robert Cook, Cllr Nigel Cooke, Cllr Gillian Corr, Cllr Evaline Cunningham, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr Kevin Faulks, Cllr John Gardner, Cllr Lisa Grainge, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Elsi Hampton, Cllr David Harrington, Cllr Di Hewitt, Cllr Ben Houchen, Cllr Stefan Houghton, Cllr Barbara Inman, Cllr Mohammed Javed, Cllr Eileen Johnson, Cllr Paul Kirton, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr Mick Moore, Cllr Mrs Kathryn Nelson, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Stephen Parry, Cllr Ross Patterson, Cllr Maurice Perry, Cllr Lauriane Povey, Cllr Rachael Proud, Cllr Paul Rowling, Cllr Michael Smith, Cllr Andrew Stephenson, Cllr Norma Stephenson O.B.E, Cllr Mick Stoker, Cllr Tracey Stott, Cllr Laura Tunney, Cllr Matthew Vickers, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Sally Ann Watson, Cllr Julia Whitehill, Cllr David Wilburn, Cllr Norma Wilburn, Cllr Bill Woodhead and Cllr Barry Woodhouse.

Officers: Neil Schneider (CE), Richard McGuckin (EG&D), Beccy Brown (HR,L&C), Garry Cummings (F&BS), J McCann (CS), R Kench (C,L&E), M Gray (CS), D E Bond (Proper Officer), P K Bell (A,D&ES).

Also in attendance: Jeremy Atkinson, Mike Cherrett, Members of the public.

Apologies: Cllr Michael Clark, Cllr Phil Dennis.

C 80/15 Welcome, Evacuation Procedure and the Recording of the Meeting

The Worshipful the Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined the procedure for the recording of the meeting.

The evacuation procedure was noted.

C 81/15 Declarations of Interest

Councillors Helen Atkinson, Mrs Ann McCoy, Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Stephen Parry and Mick Stoker declared personal prejudicial interests in respect of agenda item 10 - Community Governance Reviews - Billingham Town Council and Elton Parish Council as they were members of Billingham Town Council. Councillors Helen Atkinson, Mrs Ann McCoy, Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Stephen Parry and Mick Stoker withdrew from the meeting and left the room during consideration of the item.

Councillor Lynn Hall declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 10 -Community Governance Reviews - Billingham Town Council and Elton Parish Council as she was an elector for Elton Parish on the electoral roll, St John's Church, Elton.

Councillor Steve Nelson declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 7 - Welfare Reform as he was a member of Tristar Board.

Councillor Paul Rowling declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 7 - Welfare Reform as he was a member of Tristar Board.

Councillor Steve Nelson declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 8 - Review of Statement of Principles for Gambling Premises as he was a member of Grosvenor Casino.

C
82/15 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th November 2015 were signed by the Worshipful the Mayor as a correct record.

C
83/15 **Presentation of the Honorary Alderman of the Borough**

It gave the Worshipful the Mayor great pleasure to confer the title of Honorary Alderman on former Councillor Jeremy Atkinson who had given many years' service to the Borough.

Jeremy was called forward and signed the Honorary Alderman Roll and received his Alderman Medal, with a framed certificate.

The Worshipful the Mayor and the Chief Executive witnessed the declaration and added their signature to the Honorary Alderman Roll.

C
84/15 **Public Question Time**

The following question had been submitted by Mr and Mrs McDonald for response by the Leader of the Council. Mr and Mrs McDonald were not in attendance at the meeting and had requested that their question be read out by the Worshipful the Mayor and also that the response to their question was given at the meeting:-

"Given that meetings have taken place between Senior member of Cleveland Police and SBC in 2013 as described in letter from DCC Spittle to Mr Schneider, the subject matter being the provision of bought out child care which is clearly a very serious issue which should be recorded for transparency and responsibility purposes. I would expect that any meetings that took place between the senior people of two professional organisations would generate a minutes of meeting, Could SBC please provide details of what was discussed and conclusions reached or alternatively a copy of the Minutes of Meeting?"

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

"The discussions referred to in 2013 were not minuted. The Council is unable therefore to supply a record of what was discussed.

However, the letter of the 13 June 2014 from Deputy Chief Constable Iain Spittal does refer to those discussions, and to the information the Council had provided about how they intended to operate the residential homes it was proposed to establish in the Stockton area.

A copy of the Deputy Chief Constable's letter is accessible on the Council's website. It is appended to a copy of a report to the Planning Committee meeting held on the 18 June 2014, which approved planning application 14/1211/COU for the change of use of Red Plains to a children's home."

The following question had been submitted by Kenneth Jones for response by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People. Kenneth Jones was not in attendance at the meeting and had requested that his question be read out by

the Worshipful the Mayor and also that the response to his question was given at the meeting:-

“Considering the examples, references and data used and presented by Stockton Council at the initial planning meeting for Red Plains, it is clear you did not have the foresight, capability or sound judgement to predict the disturbingly high number of police call-outs that have occurred at the property since it opened. Had this number of call-outs been expected then what would the planning department have said about the change of use of Red Plains when it is so close to neighbouring houses - one inhabited by an old lady and the other by a family with two very young children?”

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People responded with:-

"Of course it's impossible for us to speculate what the decision of the Planning Committee might have been if they had more information or different information. We all know or certainly those who sit on the Planning Committee that each decision is based on the information you have in front of you and of course Planning Officers have always advised Members as to what is a planning issue and what is not so as I say it is impossible question to answer but I would like to add one thing.

I think we should and I have said it before in response to a previous question, have confidence in the staff at Red Plains who continue to do their duty to report when a child is late and it will always comply with that young person's care plan, it can be 15 minutes or it can be 45 minutes but it will comply with their care plan and when you consider perhaps the pressure that these staff might feel they are under because they are being watched all the time they could perhaps leave it 10 minutes or 15 minutes to make the figures less. They do not do that and I would say to you that you should have absolute confidence in the staff of that home and I will add we should have confidence in Cleveland Police who quite clearly make child protection a priority.

When, and I said this at a previous meeting, our priority is to make children cared for and I read out a statement from the children that they feel safe at Red Plains and consider it their home, I don't want anything other than that, that is sufficient for me.

The following question had been submitted by Edward Jones for response by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People. Edward Jones was not in attendance at the meeting and had requested that his question be read out by the Worshipful the Mayor.

The question was as follows:-

“When the business case was being constructed for the creation of SOG NE LLP, was the cost to police time included in this? If so, what was the projected financial cost and what is the current cost to date?”

Edward Jones would receive a written response to his question.

The following question had been submitted by Colin Rodgers for response by the Leader of the Council. Colin Rodgers was not in attendance at the meeting

and had requested that his question be read out by the Worshipful the Mayor and also that the response to his question was given at the meeting:-

“It is widely believed that when King Edwin School was acquired there were 2 four bedroom houses on site, which were both subsequently demolished. Bearing in mind the legal and moral obligation of the Council to pursue VFM on behalf of the local electorate would it not have been better to utilise the said houses for the following reasons;

- 1) Full refurbishment of these houses could have been achieved at a fraction of the acquisition costs of 118 Darlington Road alone.
- 2) The pre-stated requirement for a "semi-rural" location is achieved as they were located within the schools own grounds.
- 3) Extensive travel costs to and from remote locations would have been reduced to nil.
- 4) A controlled program of integrating the cared for children (on achieving a suitable record of conduct) to local schools on a day release, controlled and monitored manner, could have been realised.
- 5) The bad feeling within affected groups generated by the Councils questionable methods of buying these former residential properties, could have been avoided?”

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

"We do not believe your suggestion that the 2 x 4 bed properties should have been converted to be Children's Homes.

The business case for the Joint Venture was based on a model where the Children's Homes are based in communities and the children go to school, as do the majority of children in the Borough.

Whilst one of the houses on the site has been demolished, the other house is still in use by the school."

The following question had been submitted by Judith Mannion for response by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People. Judith Mannion was not in attendance at the meeting and had requested that her question be read out by the Worshipful the Mayor and also that the response to her question was given at the meeting:-

“How many children have either left or been removed from Red Plains Hartburn since the home opened on 9 March 2015?”

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People responded with:-

"Four."

C 85/15 Welfare Reform Update

Consideration was given to a report that presented an update on monitoring of the outcomes / impact of Welfare Reform and a summary of actions undertaken to mitigate against circumstances arising from the implementation of the Welfare Reform Act.

Quarterly reports on Welfare Reform had been provided to Cabinet since 2013, providing information on a range of indicators which showed how welfare reforms were impacting on residents and service provision across the borough. These reports had also included detail on any updates the Council had received with regard to the further roll-out of welfare reform and interventions the Council was making to manage its impact on the residents.

As part of the existing monitoring arrangements, new or unexpected trends had emerged such as activity around benefit sanctions, the use of local food banks and shifts in the rented housing sector from social to private landlords.

Following feedback received on previous quarterly reports, at Q4 2014/15 there was a review of the large range of information previously provided to ensure that it was more focussed and easier to follow, yet continued to provide an accurate and robust summary of welfare reform issues. The report continued to use that more focussed range of information.

The Association of North East Councils (ANEC) had commissioned the Institute of Local Governance (ILG) to undertake a piece of work monitoring the impact of welfare reform across the region. The outcomes from that research work would be useful in understanding the local impact of welfare reform and whether it differed from the impact sub-regionally and across the wider region. As part of that research work, a basket of monitoring indicators had been developed which would be collected from all participating local authorities.

To support the ILG research work, the basket of monitoring indicators that they had developed had been entirely included within the monitoring framework attached to the report, with each of those measures clearly labelled.

Members considered a number of options for Stockton's Local Council Tax Support Scheme and following public consultation agreed on the "shared reduction" option with all working age claimants paying a minimum contribution of 20% of the Council Tax charge. The Welfare Reform and Work Bill was going through Parliament. The proposals would have an impact on LCTSS expenditure. The breadth of measures being brought in over several years makes realistic estimates complex with customers gaining and losing from different welfare measures dependent on their personal circumstances. Following a challenge from the House of Lords new announcements were expected with regard to the proposed changes to Working Tax Credits which it was believed would be made in the Comprehensive Spending Review announcement on the 25 November 2015. There was too much uncertainty for the Council to make any assumption about the impact of all the proposed changes to the Council Tax Support scheme over the next financial year and on this basis Cabinet was asked to recommend to Council the existing scheme be retained. It would be necessary for a full scheme review to take place in the financial year 2016/17 to reflect any incoming changes. Local Council Tax Support Schemes were not fully funded so there may be some impact on the medium term financial plan which would need to be managed in year and reports on the impact of this would be provided as part of the financial report to Cabinet. Any scheme review would require full consultation with the public.

The Local Government Finance Act imposed a duty upon local councils to adopt

a Local Council Tax Support Scheme, to replace Council Tax Benefit, from April 2013. The existing scheme would remain in place for the financial year 2015/16. It was designed to safeguard the financial position of the Council whilst trying to ensure that the effect of the scheme did not disproportionately affect any particular group of residents.

Overall Council Tax collection for 2014/15 at 96.4% was 0.5% below target, and for those in receipt of Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) collection reduced to 79%. The method of calculating collection levels for those in receipt of LCTS changed from 2014/15 therefore it was difficult to make a direct comparison. However, the on-going collection of 2013/14 arrears from some Council Tax payers that faced new or increased charges following the introduction of LCTS meant that their 2014/15 charges remained unpaid whilst they paid off arrears. At the end of 2014/15 only 1.8% of the debit was outstanding from 2013/14.

Due to software changes, more accurate data on enforcement activity, including bailiff referrals would not be available until later in the new financial year. Levels of recovery and enforcement including the issue of summonses remained very much on par with volumes issued last year. The totals reported differed due to a change in method of calculating activity levels, therefore were not directly comparable.

Cabinet considered the report at its meeting held on 3 December 2015 and a copy of the relevant minute extract was attached to the report.

Cabinet on 3rd December 2015 had RESOLVED that:-

1. The contents of the report be noted.
2. The performance monitoring outcomes and observations provided be noted.

Council RESOLVED that:-

3. The current local Council Tax Support Scheme for the financial year 2016/17 be retained.

C 86/15 **Review of the Statement of Principles for Gambling Premises**

Consideration was given to a report on the Review of the Statement of Principles for Gambling Premises.

The Authority was required by the Gambling Act 2005 to publish a statement of the principles that it proposed to apply when exercising its functions under the Act, in the form of a Gambling Policy. This policy statement must be published every three years. The Council's policy statement took effect in January 2013 and was due for review.

The purpose of the report was for Members to consider the views and comments received from the Licensing Committee and other interested parties following consultation on the proposed revised policy.

Consultation closed on the 20 October 2015. A small number of responses

were received including substantive comments from Luxury Leisure Limited, Gosschalks Solicitors (on behalf of the Association of British Bookmakers) and Coral Racing Limited

The policy and comments received were considered at the Licensing Committee held on the 20 October 2015 when consideration was given to amending the draft policy to take account of some of the points raised. These changes had been incorporated into the final draft policy attached to the report.

The main changes to the policy were detailed within the report.

Further minor changes had been made to the draft policy following the comments received during the consultation exercise. These were also detailed within the report.

A copy of the final draft policy was available to Members.

Cabinet considered this matter at its meeting held on 3 December 2015 and a copy of the relevant minute extract was attached to the report.

RESOLVED that the revised Statement of Principles for Gambling Premises as presented in the report to Cabinet at Appendix 1 be approved.

C 87/15 Review of the Statement of Licensing Policy Made Under the Licensing Act 2003

Consideration was given to a report on the Review of the Statement of Licensing Policy Made Under the Licensing Act 2003.

The Authority was required by the Licensing Act 2003 to publish a Statement of Licensing Policy that set out its guiding principles for making licensing decisions under the Act. The Statement of Licensing Policy needed to be renewed every five years. The Policy Statement took effect in January 2011 and was due for renewal in January 2016.

Following the Licensing Committee meeting on 15 July 2015, consultation on the revised draft was commenced with the publication of a newspaper advert and the draft Policy being placed on the Council's website. Contact was made with a number of interested parties, including all responsible authorities, existing premises licence and club premises certificate holders, trade bodies and associations and community groups and residents associations. In total, only three responses were received.

The responses received and the revised draft was considered by the Licensing Committee at their meeting on 20 October 2015, and it was agreed that the revised Policy be passed onto Cabinet and Council for final approval.

The main changes to the Policy Statement from the 2011 version were summarised within the report.

Cabinet considered this matter at its meeting held on 3 December 2015 and a copy of the relevant minute extract was attached to the report.

RESOLVED that the Licensing Act 2003 Statement of Licensing Policy as presented in the report to Cabinet at Appendix 1 be approved.

**C
88/15 Community Governance Reviews – Billingham Town Council and Elton Parish Council**

The report presented feedback from consultation with stakeholders and all local government electors in the areas of Billingham Town Council and Elton Parish Council and invited comments on next steps.

Following receipt of a petition which called for the abolition of Billingham Town Council, a Community Governance Review commenced. The opportunity was also taken to conduct a Community Governance Review in relation to Elton Parish Council.

A community Governance review enabled a principal council to review and put in place new arrangements, and make changes to current community governance systems and structures, for example by creating, merging, abolishing or changing parish or town councils in the review area.

The Government had emphasized that the aim of a review should be to bring about improved community engagement, more cohesive communities, better local democracy, and result in more effective and convenient delivery of services.

The timetable approved by Cabinet and Council recognised that a review must conclude within 12 months from receipt of a valid petition (received 26 June 2015).

The key stages of the reviews were as follows:-

Consultation with all Local Government Electors in the area 17.9.15 – 31.10.15 complete

Consideration of the wider forms of Community Governance in the area 17.9.15 – 31.10.15 complete

Initial findings considered and draft proposals presented for consideration by CMT 09.11.15

Cabinet meeting 03.12.15 to consider findings.

Draft recommendations to Council 20.1.16

Consult on draft proposals 21.1.16 to 17.2.16

Final recommendation to Cabinet 17.3.16

Final recommendation to Council 27.04.16

Final Recommendations and reasons for the decision published and stakeholders informed on 28.04.16

Recommendations implemented from 28.04.16

Implementation of any proposed abolition of Billingham Town Council and Elton Parish Council would be dependent upon the time it would take to finalise and publish a re-organisation order.

An integral part of the review was to consult with the local government electors for the area under review and any other person or body, including a local authority (i.e. the Town Council) who appeared to have an interest in it.

The consultation feedback was detailed within the report. Whilst there was support for abolition in both cases, there was also support for retaining both Councils. In relation to Elton, a number of individuals had indicated that there was interest in becoming a Parish Councillor.

Cabinet considered this matter at its meeting held on 3 December 2015 and a copy of the relevant minute extract was attached to the report.

RESOLVED that:-

1. Billingham Town Council be retained.
2. Elton Parish Council be retained and a process to elect Members be commenced, following final Council approval, but that if this process and any necessary co-option does not deliver a Parish Council that is quorate then the required action should be taken to secure the dissolution of Elton Parish and the abolition of the Parish Council.

C
89/15 **Yarm Back Lane and Harrowgate Lane Master Plan**

Consideration was given to a report on Yarm Back Lane and Harrowgate Lane Masterplan.

The report advised on joint working to prepare a masterplan for a strategic sustainable urban extension at West Stockton and sought approval of a masterplan for use in the determination of planning applications at the site and as an evidence base in support of the emerging Regeneration and Environment Local Plan (RELP).

The Council had identified land at Yarm Back Lane and Harrowgate Lane as housing allocations within the RELP. The RELP was at publication stage and emerging policies (H17, H18 and H19) highlighted the need for development to be delivered in accordance with a masterplan to ensure that a sustainable urban extension of 2,150 dwellings, including associated infrastructure, was successfully delivered.

The scale of the development meant that there were numerous shared infrastructure requirements which needed to be delivered; this included but was not limited to a primary school and highway junction improvements. In addition to this there were numerous landownerships across the site. A masterplan was seen as essential in ensuring that:

- individual planning applications came forward in accordance with the

masterplan to deliver a sustainable and integrated urban extension; and

- infrastructure was delivered when it was required

The purpose of this masterplan was to provide a robust and comprehensive evidence base to support the allocation of the sites and to guide individual planning applications. .

The Council had been working in collaboration with the Advisory Team for Large Applications (ATLAS), landowners and developers and agents to prepare a comprehensive masterplan for the sites.

Planning Committee had refused a planning application on part of the site, known as Tithebarn Land (planning application reference (14/2291/EIS). This decision was being appealed by the applicant and was progressing towards a public inquiry. The reasons for refusal were as follows:

- **Development does not represent sustainable development:**
In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority the proposal in coming forward ahead of an established masterplan, could lead to an unfair distribution of uses and another developer coming forward later being asked to provide more than is justified by their own development. This could make some parcels unviable and risk necessary infrastructure not being provided for the proper planning of the area, resulting in significant social and economic harm which would be contrary to the definition and aims of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF (paragraph 7, 9 and 14).

- **Highway Safety:**
The applicant has failed to provide sufficient information to satisfactorily demonstrate that the proposed development would not have a detrimental impact on highway safety and the free flow of traffic to both the Local and Strategic Highway Networks or that the impact could be satisfactorily mitigated to the reasonable satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority and is therefore contrary to guidance within policy CS2 of the Core Strategy (1&2) and paragraph 32 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The first reason for refusal highlighted concern with development preceding in advance of a masterplan and the implications this could have for the wider site.

The planning application, which was subject to public inquiry sought permission for 340 dwellings whilst the masterplan only distributes 250 dwellings to this element of the site. The appellant was not in agreement with the distribution of dwellings identified within the masterplan. As all elements of the collaborative masterplan could not be agreed the Council had sought to progress a separate masterplan albeit the contents of this masterplan maintained the main elements of the collaborative process undertaken.

The masterplan, which was attached to the report, sought to:

- Outline the vision and development objectives for the site;
- Identify constraints and their impact on development;
- Identify infrastructure requirements;
- Provide a Strategic Framework Plan to shape development proposals;
- Provide clarity regarding the requirements for planning applications; and

- Provide clarity regarding the phasing and delivery of housing and infrastructure

Following allocation of the sites within the RELP the masterplan could be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Should the Council decide to take the masterplan forward as an SPD so that it formed part of the Development Plan there would be a requirement for a statutory period of consultation and potentially a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

The emerging RELP was supported by an Infrastructure Strategy and Schedule which provided a strategic level assessment of the infrastructure requirements arising from the RELP as a whole. Building upon this strategic assessment, a detailed Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) had been produced as part of the masterplan to co-ordinate the delivery of the infrastructure which was necessary to support residential development on the Yarm Back Lane and Harrowgate Lane sites.

The IDP drew upon the evidence base prepared to support the preparation of the masterplan and set out what infrastructure was needed and the anticipated timescales / phase of development when this should be provided. The key infrastructure requirements identified in the IDP include the provision of:

- Junction enhancements;
- Other access and transport infrastructure;
- Community hub (incorporating a primary school, community centre and neighbourhood centre);
- Green infrastructure;
- Surface water drainage infrastructure;
- Affordable housing;
- Utilities related infrastructure.

The Council had been working with landowners and developers to agree an approach to contributions and the delivery of infrastructure which was both equitable and CIL compliant. At the present time no agreement had been reached. The masterplan identified that until agreement had been reached, to the satisfaction of the Council, it would not be possible to determine planning applications at the site. The Council would continue to liaise with landowners and developers to reach agreement.

Cabinet considered this matter at its meeting held on 14 January 2015 and a copy of the relevant minute extract had been circulated to Members.

A discussion took place regarding to the consultation about the proposals and it was moved by Councillor Hall, seconded by Councillor Houchen that the item be deferred to enable further consultation to take place.

The motion was not carried.

RESOLVED that the Yarm Back Lane and Harrowgate Lane Masterplan be approved for use in the determination of planning applications and as an evidence base in support of the emerging RELP.

C
90/15 **Member Question Time**

The following question had been submitted by Councillor Cherrett for response by the Cabinet Member for Arts, Culture and Leisure:-

"In 1995 the City Challenge Arts Panel spent funding of £30,000 for a piece of public artwork entitled "Racing Ahead". The sculpture was commissioned by artist Irene Brown after a competition the public voted in and, in the words of a Stockton Council Information leaflet at the time "the life sized greyhounds are "surging ahead with energy" and "symbolise the town's dynamism and renaissance looking to a better future".

The sculpture has disappeared from the High Street during the regeneration works and repeated requests to Council Officers about the whereabouts of the sculpture and its future have proved fruitless.

Surging ahead with energy and looking to a better future must surely be key issues for the regeneration of Stockton High Street so can the Cabinet Member for Arts, Leisure and Culture confirm just where the greyhounds are currently being kennelled and when and where we might hope to see them being re-homed within Stockton High Street?"

The Cabinet Member for Arts, Leisure and Culture responded with:-

Thank you for the question.

Can we start on what we might agree on, it is a beautiful piece of art work, a beautiful piece of public sculpture that ought to be put somewhere within Stockton. What I find difficult to agree is that you haven't had answers because the email trail suggests that you have and what I couldn't possibly agree to is the return of the sculptures to the High Street for a number of reasons. Firstly because it doesn't fit with the renaissance of the High Street and as important from my point of view is that the RNIB and Guide Dogs for the Blind require us not to have pieces of sculpture in places where people can fall over them. I would agree with you it needs to be decided quite quickly so what we would ask you do and ask the rest of the Council to do is to give us some ideas of where the new location might be, there have been a few suggestions already and let us get an agreement as fast as possible so that this can be returned to public use.

Councillor Cherrett asked the following supplementary question:-

"Just referring to what Councillor Mrs Wilburn said about the email trail. In March 2015 I was told that possible locations were being drawn up. In May 2015 I was told it was imminent and in July 2015 I was told it had been agreed to explore different alternatives to these locations so why now are we being asked here tonight to suggest possible locations if that was being looked at in July of last year."

The Cabinet Member for Arts, Leisure and Culture responded with:-

"In fairness to Officers they have been quite busy with the renaissance of the High Street, The Globe and the Queen Dragon Theatre and all the other things

that perhaps have taken up more time than two energetic greyhounds running up and down I think it is important if we have spent money on it we should use it and as I say what we should do now is to hurry to a quick conclusion."

C Forward Plan and Leader's Statement

91/15

The Leader of the Council gave his Forward Plan and Leaders Statement.

Since the Council had last met on the 25th November, Cabinet met on the 3rd December and considered reports on:

- The Scrutiny review of River Tees Crossing infrastructure
- The use and control of activities in the borough's town centres
- The Northshore gateway site
- The Regeneration and Environment Local Plan evidence base review
- The Care Act 2014 and the charging policy review
- An update on the Medium Term Financial Plan
- The Quarter 2 Performance Outturn
- The Quarter 2 Welfare Reform Update
- An update on Preston Park Museum and Grounds
- The review of provision for 11-19 year olds
- A review of the statement of principles for gambling premises
- A review of the statement of Licensing policy under the licensing Act 2003
- The Community Governance Reviews for Billingham Town Council and Elton Parish Council

Looking ahead, there was a busy period coming up.

Cabinet would meet next to consider a report on the impact of the Government's financial settlement on the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan. Cabinet then meets again on the 11th February to consider reports on:

- The provision of Travel Support for Adult Social Care Service Users and Carers
- An update on progress on SEN outcomes
- The procedure for Admission of pupils to Primary and Secondary
- Early Help Developments
- The Director of Adults and Health Annual Report
- The 2016-19 Council Plan
- The Scrutiny Review of FOI requests
- Progress on Developments Across the South of the Borough
- An update on Town Centres
- Tees Active – Performance Review and Contract
- The Brighter Borough for All – Tackling Family Poverty framework.

Finally, Cabinet meets on the 18th February to consider the Medium Term Financial Plan 2016-20 which would then be brought to the special meeting of Council on the 24th February 2016.

It was clear that it was going to be a very tough year and Members were going to face some very difficult decisions. The Financial Settlement had been very difficult and was even worse than the worst case prediction of a 9% reduction in

Government Funding.

Unfortunately the Council was facing a 13% reduction in Government Funding next year and by the end of the next medium term financial plan period the Council would have seen a £73 million reduction in funding since 2010/11, that's a reduction of 61%. Cabinet would be considering this extremely difficult situation on 21st January 2016 and then again on the 18th February 2016 so that Cabinet could bring a set of recommendations to the next Council meeting on 24th February 2016.