

Council

A meeting of Council was held on Wednesday, 19th October, 2016.

Present: The Worshipful the Mayor (Cllr Ken Dixon); 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 Philip Dennis, Cllr Kevin Faulks, Cllr John Gardner, Cllr Lisa Grainge, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Elsi Hampton, Cllr Di Hewitt, Cllr Stefan Houghton, Cllr Barbara Inman, Cllr Eileen Johnson, Cllr Paul Kirton, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr Allan Mitchell, 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 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 MBE and Cllr Barry Woodhouse.

Officers: Neil Schneider (CE) Julie Danks, Peter Bell, Jenna McDonald (DCE), Jane Humphreys (CHS), Jamie McCann (CS), David Bond (Proper Officer), Beccy Brown (HR, L&C), Richard McGuckin (EGDS).

Also in attendance: Members of the public.

Apologies: Cllr Mohammed Javed, Cllr Rachael Proud, Cllr Ben Houchen, Cllr David Harrington and Cllr Ian Dalgarno.

C 61/16 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 also noted.

C 62/16 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

C 63/16 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 14th September 2016 were signed by the Worshipful the Mayor as a correct record.

C 64/16 Presentation of APSE Awards

The Worshipful the Mayor reported that each year the APSE awards attracted hundreds of submissions from councils across the nation.

In 2016, Stockton-On-Tees Borough Council won the 'Best Health and Well-being Initiative' award and was shortlisted in five other categories including:-

- Best Employment and Equality Initiative –Positive STEPS shred Pounds
- Best Service Team of the Year – Construction and Building Service
- Best Service Team of the Year – Catering Service
- Best Service Team of the Year – Street Lighting Service
- Best Service Team of the Year – Street Cleansing and Streetscene Service

Stockton on Tees Borough Council was also shortlisted for overall Council of the Year Award for the seventh year running.

With regard to the Best Health and Wellbeing Initiative Award the Cabinet Member for Adult Services and Health reported that the Multi-Disciplinary Service provided early intervention services to people over the age of 65 who needed some help and support but didn't need a full Care Act assessment at the time. The benefit of this approach was that the service could support people for up to six weeks and get them back on their feet.

Katie Dixon (Multi-Disciplinary Service Manager) and Jill Butler (Wellbeing Facilitator) were in attendance at the meeting and were presented with the Best Health and Wellbeing Initiative award by the Worshipful the Mayor and the Cabinet Member for Adult Services and Health.

**C
65/16** **Presentation of Charter Plus Award**

The Leader of the Council was delighted that Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council had achieved Charter Plus status for Member Development, it was noted that it was a fantastic achievement for Stockton and one which the authority was very proud of.

The Leader of the Council thanked the Elected Members and officers for their on-going dedication and support in this respect.

The Leader of the Council confirmed that Stockton remained fully committed to providing Members with a service that supported their work and the community, strengthening democratic engagement, participation and representation in the Borough.

Michelle Jones (Members Services Officer) was presented with the Charter Plus Award by the Worshipful the Mayor and the Leader of the Council.

**C
66/16** **Public Question Time**

The Proper Officer informed Members that no public questions had been received.

**C
67/16** **Internal Audit Shared Service**

Consideration was given to a report that sought agreement, in principle the delegation of the Internal Audit function from Darlington Borough Council to Stockton Borough Council and to establish an Internal Audit Shared Service. The service would operate under a Shared Service Agreement and Service Level Agreement.

In responding to the current financial challenges faced by both Darlington and Stockton Councils, discussions had taken place with Darlington Council regarding the benefits of a shared service arrangement for internal audit. This would complement the Xentrall shared service partnership established in 2008 for the provision of ICT, Transactional Finance and HR and Print and Design that had proved successful in delivering efficiencies and developments with no diminution in the quality and performance of services.

Stockton's internal audit service had audited the Xentrall partnership since its inception and had already reported the annual audit plan covering Xentrall and progress against outcomes from delivery to the Darlington Audit Committee in the same manner as the Council reported to its own Audit Committee.

The proposal would mean the formal sharing of internal audit services between the two authorities and bringing the management of the shared service under one manager.

The internal audit services in both Stockton and Darlington were well regarded and considered to provide an effective service. However, individually they were relatively small with staffing of six and a half and four respectively possessing a mix of skills and experience and budgets for 2016/17 of £274,000 and £176,000.

The opportunity would be taken to review methods of working, explore the greater use of technology and establish a shared internal audit structure to deliver a modern resilient service that satisfied service requirements. In particular, in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 each Council had a statutory duty to undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance. Such standards and guidance were the UK Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) and Local Government Application Note.

It was proposed that Stockton be the host authority for the shared service due to the following reasons:

- The number of staff affected by transferring to the host authority was less;
- Stockton had expressed a willingness to act as the host authority and had experience of delivering shared services; and
- The Audit Manager at Darlington had expressed a willingness to take early retirement/ voluntary redundancy

Subject to approval by both Councils, and to appropriate legal agreements being put in place, the target date for implementation of a shared internal audit service was 1 April 2017.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The establishment of an Internal Audit Shared Service with Stockton Council acting as host authority, on the basis set out in the report, be supported in principle.
2. Delegated powers from Darlington Borough Council to allow Stockton Council to provide a shared Internal Audit service be accepted.
3. Authority be delegated to the Director of Finance and Business Services, in consultation with the Director of HR, Legal and Communications, to finalise the arrangements for a shared service partnership.

4. Authority be delegated to the Director of Finance and Business, in consultation with the Director of HR, Legal and Communications, to agree the commencement of the shared service (the target date being the 1 April 2017).

**C
68/16** **Amendments and Appointment to Committees, Outside Bodies and Panels for 2016/19**

At its Annual Meeting, held on Wednesday 3 June 2015, the Council approved appointments to its Committees and Joint Bodies for 2015/19.

The following amendment had been requested and was presented for Council consideration:-

- Central Locality Forum

Remove Councillor Rachel Proud – Add Councillor Norma Stephenson

Following the recent Grangefield Ward By–Election result the following amendment was required and was in-line with the political composition of the Council:-

- Executive Scrutiny Committee

Remove Councillor Lisa Grainge – Add Councillor Gillian Corr

Council was also requested to make a nomination to the Tees Valley Combined Authority Independent Remuneration Panel. It had been suggested that the appropriate person for this appointment would be the Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Stockton-on-Tees:-

Tees Valley Combined Authority Independent Remuneration Panel

Nominate the Chair of Stockton’s Independent Remuneration Panel (Tony Campbell) as a member of the Combined Authority’s Remuneration Panel.

RESOLVED that the amendments/nomination be agreed.

**C
69/16** **Member Question Time**

The following question had been submitted by Councillor Rowling for response by the Leader of the Council:-

“There seems to have been a lot of misinformation distributed about the cost and purpose of the duck used in Stockton Town Centre and Mayor’s charitable promotions. Can Councillor Cook please confirm the facts?”

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

"I can confirm that the total cost of the duck was £2,767 and that it was bought for 2 very good reasons:

Firstly:

- The duck is part of our work to promote Stockton Town Centre. Stockton is an events town, there is always something going on - from festivals to specialists markets, from street theatre to dance and music. This is all part of our strategy to add attractions to town to support the businesses that trade here by attracting visitors and shoppers.
- We all know that, right across the country, traditional town centres are struggling as a result of online shopping, out of town retail parks and the recession.
- We have a choice to either give up and accept this or to fight back and invest in our towns to attract shoppers and visitors by creating reasons to come here to shop and visit.
- We haven't given up – we're investing in the regeneration of the town centre. We've added the central fountain area, the plinth, the automata, the events spaces, the public artwork and heritage plaques. We're investing in the Globe and we deliver a year-round programme of events. As part of this we carry out lots of marketing activity through the REDISCOVER Stockton campaign and make sure that we can provide as much interest and animation in the town centre as possible.
- The huge duck is part of this - it provides an eye-catching advertising board when it is used to promote upcoming events, it provides a popular attraction for children in the fountain area when the fountains are switched off and it is a fun addition to town centre events.
- Whilst I'm sure we'd like to take credit for original thinking on this one - it has to be said that in fact it joins a long history of Sheep statues in Bristol, The Headington Shark in Oxford, concrete cows in Milton Keynes, elephants in Chester and no doubt many more.

Secondly:

- The duck was also bought to support the annual Mayor's duck race which takes place to support Armed Forces charities.
- Sponsorship of the large duck will be sought every year to raise funds for the Mayor's charities.
- To date the Mayor's duck races have raised a total of £13,670 for charity.
- This is the first year the large duck has been available to support the charitable work and I'm pleased to say that thanks to £1,000 sponsorship from Balfour Beatty, the Rifles' 'Care for Casualties' Charity, the Yorkshire Regiment Benevolent Fund and 1 Close Support Battalion REME have all benefitted.

Thank you."

Councillor Rowling asked the following supplementary question:-

"The reason I brought this question was because residents had got in touch because unfortunately this duck that raises a lot of money for charities seems to be being used for political purposes. I have got five letters here that are showing incorrect sums, can the Leader of the Council please confirm if there is any way in which complaints can be made, because I have heard from other authorities that they can be, and if not, can we please convene a meeting of MAP to discuss it."

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

"I will take this away and look at it with our Legal Officers to see what can be done around complaints such as this and I will get back to you in the future."

The following question had been submitted by Councillor Cherrett for response by the Cabinet Member for Access, Communities and Community Safety:-

"CCTV cameras are a useful deterrent as well as providing valuable evidence in the event of a crime. Given the financial restrictions that this council faces, can the Cabinet Member for Access, Communities and Community Safety tell me what the future arrangements will be for the monitoring of CCTV cameras in areas such as Ropner Park, Newham Grange Park and other public spaces?"

The Cabinet Member for Access, Communities and Community Safety responded with:-

"Monitoring of CCTV in parks will continue as at present with the exception of Preston Park where 3 new CCTV cameras are planned and will be operational in early December."

Councillor Cherrett asked the following supplementary question:-

"We can never know how much crime has been prevented by the presence of CCTV cameras, where it does exist, how many offenders have been prosecuted as a result of the camera evidence and how much financial compensation has been awarded to this authority for damage caused to our property?"

The Cabinet Member for Access, Communities and Community Safety responded with:-

"I don't have these figures in my head but what I can say is that in the first six months of this year, our CCTV cameras assisted in 210 arrests and I have got other figures available, if you give me an exact question I can provide an answer. It is very pleasing when an opposition Member acknowledges the financial restrictions this Council faces, so thank you for that, especially when your Government were the ones making the cuts. It would be hypocritical to do otherwise and I hope in the future we do get some more questions that accept that this Council is under considerable financial pressure."

The following question had been submitted by Councillor Watson for response by the Cabinet Member for Environment and Housing:-

"I have had emails from several residents in my Ward questioning the cut-off point for green waste collection. As part of the current recycling review, will there be any discussion with a view to increasing the number of weeks that green waste will be collected from the kerbside by this Council?"

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Housing responded with:-

"The green waste service is being looked as part of the Kerbside Recycling Review along with other aspects of recycling and recycling performance. The current green waste collection runs for 26 weeks per year and costs in the region of £450,000 including disposal. The review will consider both the collection period and cost however this will have to be considered in the context of the funding and the pressures we face through continued Government funding reductions."

Councillor Watson asked the following supplementary question:-

"Would extending our green waste collection not only contribute to our recycling figure as well as keeping our residents happy?"

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Housing responded with the following:-

"In some ways Councillor I agree with you, it certainly would keep the residents happy and as for the carbon footprint your right again. But that said we just haven't got the money."

C 70/16 **Forward Plan and Leader's Statement**

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

Since the last meeting in September, Cabinet had met on the 6th of October and considered reports on:

- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in Stockton
- The Internal Audit Shared Service
- The Street Lighting Policy
- The potential local economic impact of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union
- The Economic Climate update
- The Community Libraries Review

And,

- An investment strategy for Schools, Special Educational Needs and Early Years.

Cabinet would next meet on the 10th of November and would consider reports on:

- A charging Policy Review Update following the Care Act
- Recommendations following consultation on Travel Support for Adult Services

Users and Carers

- School Performance regarding vulnerable groups
 - The Scrutiny Review of Youth Services
 - Spark of Genius Progress Update
 - The Council Plan Mid-Year Update
 - An Elections Update
 - The consultation response on the Initial Proposals for New Parliamentary constituency Boundaries in the North East
 - The Proposed Freedom Parade & Armed Forces Day Programme for 2017
 - An update on the Tees Valley Combined Authority
 - The mid-year Welfare Reform Update
 - Learning & Skills Annual Report and update on the Board of Governors
 - The Stockton on Tees Local Plan (Draft for Consultation)
 - A report on the 2016 Cycling Festival and SIRF 2016
 - The Scrutiny Review of DNA Testing and Dog Fouling
- And,
- Disabled Facilities Grant Funding

The Leader of the Council would be travelling with the other Tees Valley Leaders and Mayor to meet with the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to discuss future funding commitments for the Combined Authority.

The Leader of the Council was also delighted to hear that Stockton had been short-listed in the top 3 towns nationally for the Rising Star category in the Great British High Street Awards. The Leader of the Council encouraged Members to support the High Street in this award and go on line and vote.

There were lots of events taking place over the next month - with the Heritage Fayre in the Town Centre, the Halloween spooky walks at Preston Hall on the 31st of October, The Festival of Light and Colour in the High Street on the 2nd of November and the firework display on the 5th of November at the riverside. And of course Sunday, 13th of November would also see acts of remembrance taking place across the borough. The Leader of the Council looked forward to see Members at the next meeting on the 17th of November 2016.