

Council

A meeting of Council was held on Wednesday, 14th March, 2018.

Present: : The Worshipful the Mayor (Cllr Maurice Perry); Cllr Helen Atkinson, Cllr Sonia Bailey, Cllr Paul Baker, Cllr Louise Baldock, 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 Stefan Houghton, Cllr Barbara Inman, Cllr Mohammed Javed, Cllr Eileen Johnson, Cllr Paul Kirton, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr Mrs Kathryn Nelson, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Ross Patterson, Cllr Stephen Richardson, Cllr Paul Rowling, Cllr Andrew Stephenson, Cllr Norma Stephenson O.B.E, Cllr Mick Stoker, Cllr Matthew Vickers, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Sally Ann Watson, Cllr Paul Weston, Cllr David Wilburn, Cllr Norma Wilburn, Cllr Bill Woodhead MBE and Cllr Barry Woodhouse.

Officers: Neil Schneider (CE), Julie Danks, Peter Bell (DCE), Beccy Brown, Jonathan Nertney (HR, L&C), Garry Cummings (F&BS), Richard McGuckin (E,G&D), Jamie McCann (CS), Ann Workman (AH); Reuben Kench (CL&E).

Also in attendance: Members of the public.

Apologies: Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Phil Dennis, Cllr Tony Hampton, Cllr Dianne Hewitt, Cllr Mick Moore, Cllr Lauriane Povey, Cllr Mike Smith, Cllr Tracey Stott, Cllr Marilyn Surtees, Cllr Laura Tunney and Cllr Julia Whitehill.

1 Welcome, Evacuation and Recording of the Meeting

The Worshipful the Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and the evacuation procedure was noted. It was also noted that the Governance Officer would be making an audio recording of the meeting to assist in the drafting of minutes of the meeting.

2 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Norma Stephenson declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 10 - Motion to Council - Cleveland Police as she was the Chair of the Cleveland Police and Crime Panel.

Councillor Matthew Vickers declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 10 - Motion to Council - Cleveland Police as he was a member of the Cleveland Police and Crime Panel.

Councillor David Harrington declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 10 - Motion to Council - Cleveland Police as he was a member of the Cleveland Police and Crime Panel.

Councillor David Wilburn declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 10 - Motion to Council - Cleveland Police as he was a member of the Cleveland Police and Crime Panel.

Councillor Jim Beall declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 12 – Motion to Council – Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council staff as his wife was employed by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.

Councillor Bob Cook declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 12 – Motion to Council – Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council staff as his daughter was employed by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2018 were signed by the Worshipful the Mayor as a correct record.

4 Public Question Time

The following question had been submitted by Terry Chapman for response by the Leader of the Council:-

“In view of the required overall break even occupancy rate of 85%, what are the implications for Stockton Council finances, and what contingency plans does the Council have in place to protect services, in the event that the Hamptons of Hilton fails to make a profit?”

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

“You are wrong in assuming an overall break even occupancy rate of 85%. The Council has a robust approach to financial and risk management, all of which is considered in the Council’s medium term financial plan planning process.”

Terry Chapman asked the following supplementary question:-

“Would the Leader of the Council give a proper answer to the question instead of hiding behind this phrase of robust systems in place? What happens if it fails as I believe it will do?”

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

“I can only answer the question that you actually ask, if you get the figures wrong it is not my fault that I can only answer what you have put down on your piece of paper. The answer is what I have given you. We have a robust financial planning system within the Council that looks at all risks and investments for this Council.”

5 The Council Plan 2018-21

Consideration was given to a report that presented a draft Council Plan for 2018-21, prior to it being submitted for to Council for approval.

The Council Plan set out the vision and key objectives of the Council. It aimed to provide clarity and focus for Councillors, managers, staff, members of the public and partners about the Council’s ambitions. The full Council Plan was attached to the report.

The Council Plan summarised the Council’s strategic position over the next 3 years and was reviewed and approved annually by Cabinet and Full Council. Cabinet received six monthly update reports that contain key indicators plus key announcements and developments.

The Council Plan described the Council's Vision and Key Objectives across eight themes:-

Economic Regeneration and Transport Environment and Housing
Community Safety
Children and Young People Health and Wellbeing
Strong Communities
Adults
Arts, Culture and Leisure

The Council Plan described the Council's four policy principles that support our decision making:

- Protect the vulnerable
- Create economic prosperity
- Tackle inequality
- Help people to be healthier

The Council Plan was fully aligned with four key supporting plans, for which Cabinet received quarterly update reports containing key indicators plus key announcements and developments:

- a. Finance - The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) summarised the Council's financial position over the next 3 years and was reviewed and approved annually by Cabinet and Full Council.
- b. Economic Growth - The Economic Strategy set out the Council's long term vision and ambitions in relation to economic growth and was reviewed and approved annually by Cabinet. The Economic Growth Plan set out what would be delivered in the next 3 years to deliver the outcomes and ambitions in the Economic Strategy and was also reviewed and approved annually by Cabinet.
- c. Adults - The Adult Social Care Strategy: Promoting Independence set out what would be delivered in the next 3 years to deliver the Council's outcomes and ambitions in relation to adults social care services and was reviewed and approved annually by Cabinet.
- d. Children - The Children's Services Strategy set out what would be delivered in the next 3 years to deliver the Council's outcomes and ambitions in relation to children and young people and was reviewed and approved annually by Cabinet.

Discussion sessions had been organised for the 14th and 16th February 2018, for elected members to discuss the Council Plan alongside the Medium Term Financial Plan.

The full version of the Council Plan would be published on the Council's website following approval by Full Council.

Cabinet had considered the Council Plan at its meeting held on 15 February 2018 and a copy of the relevant minute extract was attached to the report.

RESOLVED that the Council Plan 2018-21 be approved.

6 Stockton-on-Tees Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2016/2017

Consideration was given to a report on the Stockton-on-Tees Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2016 / 2017.

There was a statutory requirement under section 14A of the Children Act 2004 and the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 for Local Safeguarding Children Boards to produce and publish an annual report on the effectiveness of safeguarding in the local area, including the implementation of Serious Case Review action plans.

In accordance with this statutory requirement the report was submitted to the Chief Executive, Leader of the Council, the local Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chair of the Health and Well-being Board.

It was the intention of SLSCB to share this with all partner agencies and with those that had influence over the services provided to children and families in Stockton-on-Tees. The purpose of this report was:

- To provide an outline of the main activities of SLSCB and achievements during 2016-17;
- To comment on the effectiveness of safeguarding activity and of SLSCB in supporting this;
- To provide the public and partner agencies with an overview of safeguarding activity;
- To identify gaps and challenges in service development in the year ahead.

The key achievements and challenges of the Board for 2016 / 2017 were referenced in the SLSCB 2016 /2017 Annual Report. The following was a snapshot of some of the other achievements:

- All of the Councils Children's Homes, including those developed as part of the joint venture with Spark of Genius, were rated good or outstanding.
- £31million secured to invest in school and nursery buildings across the Borough.
- 62.4 per cent of young people across Stockton-on-Tees attained five A*-C grades including English and Maths.
- The joint multi agency Children's Hub with Hartlepool providing advice and guidance on services and support for children, young people and families was established
- 99% of early years provision were rated good or outstanding
- 4.7% young people were either Not in Education, Employment or Training or Not Known, compared to a national average of 5.7%.
- Concordat for Children in Custody alongside a Tees Vulnerable People in Custody Group report was considered and an action plan for improvement was

developed.

- Findings from the CQC Children Looked After and Safeguarding Review (Hartlepool) was discussed to consider the implications for services in Stockton-on-Tees. Assurance was obtained around the CAMHS DNA pathway, and the LAC Nurse/Named Nurse arrangements. This was a productive piece of work from which learning was shared to improve local circumstances.
- 700 taxi drivers and private hire firms received training so they can help protect vulnerable adults and safeguard children
- The Youth Offending Team was praised by the Youth Justice Board for its “excellent performance”, particular reference was made to safeguarding work.

The embedded working approach introduced during 2016 / 2017 would remain, focusing on:

- Ensuring co-operation and co-ordination between agencies
- Effective challenge and scrutiny of policies, practice and performance
- Enabling change to improve outcomes

In addition the Board would continue with its two operational priority areas of:

- a) Preventing harm: tackling the root causes of neglect, with a focus on domestic abuse, drugs and alcohol and parental mental health
- b) Protecting vulnerable children: reducing the risks of children and young people who are VEMT or at risk of being VEMT.

It would also continue to build upon its third priority area - business improvement.

Work would also include the following, which was not in any particular order and in some cases was already underway:

- Review and propose preferred footprint option for the new Safeguarding Partnership that is required from the Children & Social Work Act 2017.
- Continue to request Operational Assurance Reports as a means of facilitating effective scrutiny and challenge.
- Champion the Graded Care Profile 2 Assessment Tool
- Request assurance of effectiveness of the Hartlepool & Stockton-on-Tees Children’s Hub.
- Recognise the importance of ensuring Children Missing Education are monitored / seen to avoid them being ‘lost’.
- Challenge all agencies to share learning from single agency audits highlighting that this is not solely the function of Children’s Social Care.
- Monitor improvements and the impact made, following the appointment of the VEMT Co-ordinator.
- Highlight and share good practice related to the ‘Future in Mind Programme’ that will take place within schools to support mental wellbeing of children.
- Continue to ask ‘So What’ and ‘Why’ in order to establish the impact of work taking place with children and their families.

All partners of SLSCB strive to make continual improvements of their effectiveness in ensuring the safety and well-being of children both individually

and as a partnership whilst at the same time recognising the challenges faced, locally, regionally and nationally.

RESOLVED that the 2016 / 2017 Annual Report of the Stockton-on-Tees Local Safeguarding Children Board be noted.

7 Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board – Annual Report 2016-17

The Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board (TSAB) Annual Report for 2016-17 was presented to Council for information. The Annual Report detailed the achievements and future challenges of the TSAB.

The report provided an overview of the work of the Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board. This illustrated the progress made over the past year, and set out the ambitions for continued improvement.

The Board's overall approach was underpinned by the commitment to listen to the voices of those who used services to help shape the priorities. The report explained how this had been achieved, set out under each of the Board's five Strategic Aims.

The Board brought together four Local Authorities, health, police and a wide range of partners into a safeguarding network. By working in this positive, collaborative way resources were used as effectively as possible and limited duplication. The benefits of sharing data and information could be seen, and in March 2017 published the first strategic overview of adult safeguarding. This gave evidence on the effectiveness of preventative strategies, and highlighted ways to improve reporting, especially from marginalised groups. By sharing and analysing this information adults could be protected better from abuse.

It had been a challenging year. In addition to adapting to the new legislative framework continuing austerity had been seen across the public sector, whilst demand and expectations increase. There had been a rise in concerns across the Tees area, which did not necessarily mean an increase in actual levels of abuse, but could be linked to the approach to raising awareness of safeguarding through locality events and media publicity campaigns.

The Annual Report provided feedback on the Board's 5 Strategic Aims, which were initially set for three years: 2015-18, and the 10 Objectives set within that framework for 2016-17. The work of the Sub-Groups over the last year was also outlined, as well as looking at future priorities.

Positive Progress the Board's statutory partners completed the Quality Assurance Framework over the last 12 months (pages 24 & 28), which was a significant milestone as adult safeguarding services had never been tested in this way across Tees before. Training provision had been expanded, and the analysis of Teeswide operational and SAR data was starting to help inform the approach in relation to preventative practice.

Key Areas for Development Further integration with other strategic bodies was still required, which included improving the focus on community, harder to reach and marginalised groups. This overlapped with the continuing need to remove barriers to reporting, and ensure newer forms of abuse become more prominent

in the work of Local Authority safeguarding teams.

RESOLVED that the 2016-17 Annual Report of the Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board be noted.

8 Amendments to Committees for 2017/19

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

The following amendments had been received and were presented for Council consideration:-

Crime and Disorder Select Committee

Remove Councillor Paul Weston
Add Councillor Chris Barlow

Place Select Committee

Remove Councillor Chris Barlow
Add Councillor Paul Weston

Central Area Locality Forum

Remove Councillor Lisa Grainge
Add Councillor Louise Baldock

Remove Councillor Eileen Johnson
Add Councillor Nigel Cooke

Remove Councillor Norma Stephenson
Add Councillor David Wilburn

Crime and Disorder Select Committee

Remove Councillor Sylvia Walmsley
Add Councillor Ian Dalgarno

People Select Committee

Remove Councillor Sylvia Walmsley
Add Councillor Mick Moore

RESOLVED that the above amendments be agreed.

9 Motion

The following motion had been submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12.1. The motion was moved by Councillor Norma Stephenson and seconded by Councillor David Harrington:-

“This Council very much values and supports the work of Cleveland Police in

our communities.

We believe the first duty of any government is to keep us safe. Current government policy of 7 years of austerity on our public services, including a loss in Cleveland of 500 police officer posts , and council tax rises needed to prevent further cuts due to insufficient grant support , is a matter of real concern for this council, and is having a serious impact on our communities.

We value and welcome the progress made in recent years by the Cleveland force, despite austerity and increasing demand, including being recognised as 'Good' in efficiency and effectiveness by the independent inspectors HMIC and we look forward to further progress in the future.

We also warmly welcome the appointment of a new Chief Constable Mike Veal, following a rigorous recruitment process and note he already has the support of a wide range of senior stakeholders in public services; criminal justice; independent & community scrutineers; and the Cleveland Police & Crime Panel.

We look forward to further co-operation and collaboration between Police, Council, other services, including all those volunteers and community groups whose work we also value, and urge all stakeholders to work positively with the Chief Constable, Cleveland Force and the PCC to make our communities safer and stronger.”

A vote took place and the motion was carried.

10 Motion

The following motion had been submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12.1. The motion was moved by Councillor Paul Weston and seconded by Councillor Norma Stephenson:-

“This Council notes that Universal Credit, the single monthly payment which replaces the six current means-tested working-age benefits, is to affect a significantly wider group of claimants from July 2018 when the 'Full Service' is rolled out to Stockton.

This council also notes that, within our area, the number of people who will be affected by these changes is likely to be in the tens of thousands once it is fully implemented by 2022.

Stockton Borough Council notes with concern that the move to a Full Service Universal Credit in other parts of the country has caused considerable financial hardship for many of those people moving onto this new system of benefit payments.

Although some welcome changes have been introduced following the announcements in the November 2017 budget, these do not go anywhere near to addressing all of the known problems with Universal Credit which include:

- Payments to one named member of a household. It can be a struggle to budget on an extremely low income and payments should be paid to the separate claimants within a household, in particular to the main carer of

children, as there is no guarantee the money will be distributed fairly within the household. Claimants should also have the choice to be paid fortnightly rather than on a monthly basis. Whilst alternative payment arrangements are available, these are for exceptional circumstances and often only considered if / when it is identified the claimants are getting into difficulty.

- Claimants do not have the option of whether to have their housing costs element of Universal Credit paid directly to landlords when they make their initial claim. This could reduce the unacceptably high levels of arrears and homelessness that have occurred in the areas where UC already exists. Whilst the claimant or landlord can apply for an alternative payment arrangement this is often only considered after they have got into financial difficulty and are behind with their rent, which is too late. Pushing claimants unnecessarily into debt adds to the stress and insecurity for claimants.

- The repayments of 'Advance Payments' of Universal Credit in combination with rate of deductions for debts are causing severe hardship. Whilst it is acknowledged that the government has extended the repayment period this does not go far enough. The advance payments which are necessary to help claimants in the six week wait for their first payment, should be either non-recoverable or repayable at an affordable rate without causing stress and further indebtedness.

- The continuation of benefit sanctions. As there is no evidence that sanctioning helps people into work. In fact taking away claimant's ability to feed themselves and their families prevents them from focusing on finding employment as they are too busy trying to survive. The evidence of the harm that sanctions cause is growing – they are an unnecessary cruelty in our benefits system.

- Adequate and timely one-to-one support is not ensured and needs to be available to all new claimants to apply for Universal credit and also with the ongoing management of digital Universal Credit accounts. Forcing new claimant to apply and manage their claims on-line causes real problems for many people who don't have either access or the IT skills to cope with the complex online system. Funding arrangements for local authorities to provide digital support to claimants is uncertain and there needs to be clear alternative arrangements for people with difficulties using the digital system.

- The in-work conditionality for part-time or low paid workers. The idea that there are extra hours or higher paid work for the large numbers of these affected workers is simply not the case. This aspect of UC needs to be abandoned as it places the emphasis on individuals who often want greater number of hours of work – and not on the employers who benefit from short hours and insecurity.

- The overall level that UC is funded at is inadequate and needs to be urgently increased. The rate at which some claimants will lose benefit is set at 63p in the pound which when compared with the top rate of income tax of 45% on incomes over £150,000 a year, demonstrates just how unfair UC is for the lowest income households. The 'work allowances' need to be restored to ensure

that people keep a fair portion of their earnings before their benefit is affected, this will make work pay in line with original promise of Universal Credit, and ensure that people are not worse off than on the existing tax credit system.

- The cuts to Universal Credit which affect severely disabled people should be urgently reconsidered and Transitional Protection made available so that no claimant is made worse off on moving onto Universal Credit during any phase of the roll out.

This council notes with concern, therefore, that the implementation of a Full Service Universal Credit in the Borough is likely to prove seriously detrimental to the health and wellbeing of thousands of its local residents. Stockton-On-Tees Borough Council therefore resolves to:

Request that the Council Leader write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions asking that the system of Universal Credit is redesigned in such a way that it removes the inherent risks that this Council has expressed its concerns over.”

A vote took place and the motion was carried.

11 Motion

The following motion had been submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12.1. The motion was moved by Councillor Paul Rowling and seconded by Councillor Louise Baldock:-

“We the elected members of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council would like to thank all staff for their incredible hard work during the recent bad weather. Members of staff across all departments showed exceptional dedication to ensure services continued to be provided in challenging weather conditions.”

A vote took place and the motion was carried.

12 Members' Question Time

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

“Recent government impact assessments have shown that the North East will be the hardest hit region under each Brexit scenario. With one year to go until March 2019 there continues to be uncertainty about the nature of future access to European markets.

As things stand businesses across Stockton trade with the EU, their supply chains run tariff free across Member States and many jobs are heavily reliant on access to these markets. Whilst negotiations are ongoing and we are all hopeful of a good deal, the rhetoric from both sides suggest a so called ‘hard Brexit’ is more likely than ever.

Can the Leader of the Council update Members on what discussions are taking place both here in Stockton and across the Tees Valley regarding the potential effects of the United Kingdom’s withdrawal from the European Union?”

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

“The Tees Valley has benefited from £180M of EU transition funding in the current period until 2021 which has allowed opportunity for businesses to seek support to expand and grow. This funding has also allowed support to key public sector interventions to grow the economy and labour market not least in the skills agenda, one example being the youth employment initiative.

The Combined Authority network has been advised by the UK government that a new prosperity fund will be launched to provide a replacement to the current European funding mechanism. The scale and distribution of this new fund is yet to be determined, and may even be a bidding process, who knows?

It is my top priority to protect the many businesses across Stockton who rely on international trade with the EU. I will be writing to both of our MPs and the Tees Valley Mayor to insist they lobby as hard as possible to ensure the UK government understands the vital importance of an EU trade relationship to the economy of Stockton on Tees.”

Councillor Paul Rowling asked the following supplementary question:-

“Since I have put in this question the European Union have indicated that a free trade deal is the least of their aspirations. The UK Government assessments show that this will have an 11% contraction on the North East economy, can the Leader of the Council ensure he continues to keep dialog with all local leaders and continues to keep Members updated?”

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

“The Tees Valley has a net export for this country and brings in billions of pounds for not only the Tees Valley economy but the national economy unlike other areas so we are reliant more on the European market and as a North East region we need to ensure that we get the best deal possible to ensure that the exports that we deliver now are exported in the future.

Yes as decisions are made and as information comes forward we will do a report to all Members to ensure that you are kept up-to-date with what is happening with the negotiations across the country and what is happening locally.”

13 Forward Plan and Leader’s Statement

The Leader of the Council gave his Forward Plan.

Cabinet last met on the 15th February and considered reports on:

- The 2018-21 Council Plan
- TVCA Borrowing Regulations
- The Annual Review of the Council Constitution
- The Scrutiny Review of Billingham Event Infrastructure
- Children's Services 3rd Quarter Performance Update
- The Early Years Assessment and Moderation Toolkit

- The Procedure for Admission of Pupils to Primary and Secondary Schools in September 2019
- The Stockton Riverside College Annual Update

Cabinet would next meet on 15 March 2018 tomorrow and receive reports on:

- The Scrutiny review of security at Preston Park
- Tackling inequalities in Stockton on Tees
- A review of the CQC inspections of registered services
- An update on the redevelopment of the Victoria site
- An update on the Local Plan

After that the Leader of the Council looked forward to seeing Members at the Annual Meeting on the 4th of April at the Forum Theatre in Billingham.