

Council

A meeting of Council was held on Wednesday, 29th January, 2020.

Present: The Worshipful the Mayor (Cllr Lynn Hall), Cllr Helen Atkinson, Cllr Louise Baldock, Cllr Chris Barlow, Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Jacky Bright, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Robert Cook, Cllr Nigel Cooke, Cllr Evaline Cunningham, Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr Lisa Evans, Cllr Kevin Faulks, Cllr Luke Frost, Cllr Clare Gamble, Cllr Stefan Houghton, Cllr Barbara Inman, Cllr Mohammed Javed, Cllr Eileen Johnson, Cllr Paul Kirton, Cllr Tina Large, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr David Minchella, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Ross Patterson, Cllr Maurice Perry, Cllr Lauriane Povey, Cllr Stephen Richardson, Cllr Tony Riordan, Cllr Andrew Sherris, Cllr Michael Smith, Cllr Norma Stephenson O.B.E, Cllr Mick Stoker, Cllr Ted Strike, Cllr Marilyn Surtees, Cllr Hilary Vickers, Cllr Matthew Vickers, Cllr Steve Walmsley, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Alan Watson, Cllr Sally Ann Watson, Cllr Paul Weston, Cllr Julia Whitehill, Cllr Bill Woodhead MBE and Cllr Barry Woodhouse.

Officers: Julie Danks (MD), Beccy Brown, Jonathan Nertney (HR,L&C), Jamie McCann (CS), Garry Cummings (F&BS), Martin Gray (CS), Peter Bell (DS).

Also in attendance: Netanya Alwis (Big Committee), Members of the public.

Apologies: Cllr Julia Cherrett, Cllr Chris Clough, Cllr Clare Gamble, Cllr John Gardner, Cllr Ray Godwin, Cllr Tony Hampton, Cllr Mick Moore, Cllr Andrew Stephenson and Cllr Laura Tunney.

1 Welcome and Evacuation Procedure

The Worshipful the Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and the evacuation procedure was noted.

2 Former Councillors Peter Cooke and Bob Gibson OBE

Members were aware of the very sad news that former Councillors Peter Cooke and Bob Gibson OBE had passed away.

Peter was one of the five Cooke brothers who were members simultaneously during the 1970's and early 1980's. Peter had 10 years continuous service as a member from 1973-83, when he retired to work abroad. Peter was councillor for the old North End Ward from 1973-79 and then following a boundary review he was the Councillor for Newtown Ward from 1979-83.

Bob was first elected to Cleveland County Council in 1981 and served in local government for 34 years, including 17 years as the Council Leader. Bob was awarded the OBE in 2006 for his services to local government. Bob stepped down as a councillor at the 2015 Local elections and in the same year the Council awarded him both Honorary Alderman status and the Freedom of the Borough.

Members stood in a minute's silence as a mark of respect for former Councillors Peter Cooke and Bob Gibson OBE.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared.

4 Minutes

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 20 November

2019.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2020 be signed as a correct record.

5 Long Service Awards

The Worshipful the Mayor welcomed Kevin Powton and Kathryn Nesbitt to the meeting.

Both Kevin and Kathryn had completed an incredible 25 years' service with the Council.

The Worshipful the Mayor presented Kevin and Kathryn with their framed long service certificate.

6 Public Question Time

The Chief Solicitor informed Members that no Public Questions had been received.

7 Appointment of Independent Persons

Consideration was given to a report that provided Council with the recommendations from the Monitoring Officer following a recruitment process regarding the appointment of Independent Persons, as required by the Localism Act 2011 ("the 2011 Act").

On the 8 July 2015 Council agreed to appoint the current Independent Person, Norman Rollo and two reserves, Mike Hill and Jeff Bell, for an extended period of office expiring in 2019. In 2019 Norman Rollo informed the Monitoring Officer that he wished to stand down from the role. Mike Hill and Jeff Bell confirmed their willingness to continue to fulfil the role pending the outcome of a recruitment exercise for new Independent Persons. In addition, Jeff Bell had agreed to remain in post for a transitional period.

Since their appointment the Independent Persons had been consulted on code of conduct allegations during the period since the Council initially adopted a code of conduct on 18 July 2012, together with dispensations for Members under section 33 of the 2011 Act. During their terms the Independent Persons had attended various Council meetings, such as Planning Committee, Cabinet and full Council, in order to develop a greater understanding of how the Authority's governance works in practice. They had also attended sub-regional and regional meetings of Independent Persons and Standards Chairs / Vice Chairs

The 2011 Act required the Council to appoint at least one Independent Person for the purposes of its arrangements for dealing with allegations of misconduct by local authority Members.

The Act provided (amongst other things) that a person may not be appointed as an Independent Person unless the vacancy had been advertised, and the

appointment had been approved by a majority of the members of the Council.

The advertisement for the positions of Independent Person was displayed on the Council's website and promoted via Social Media. Copies were provided for display in the Council's libraries and were also circulated to the other Tees Valley Local Authorities for circulation and via the Catalyst Bulletin to the VCSE sector.

By the closing date in November 2019 sixteen enquiries had been received which led to five expressions of interest. One of these was unable to be considered as they did not meet the statutory criteria to ensure impartiality of the role given that they were an employee of the authority. The four remaining applicants were invited to meet with the Monitoring Officer in order to discuss the role and their experience. The Independent Persons were consulted on the proposed applicants and references had also been taken for both applicants. Both proposed appointees meet the statutory criteria and had relevant experience and personal attributes to fulfil the role.

Given the numbers of complaints received during 2017/18 (9) and 2018/19 (17) the availability of more than one Independent Person had been invaluable. Appointing more than one Independent Person was also a sensible precaution to cover the Independent Person's statutory responsibilities in the event that he/she was unable to act or is otherwise unavailable.

In addition, the standing orders relating to disciplinary action against protected statutory officers (the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015) required Councils to establish Panels which had at least two Independent Persons (appointed pursuant to the Localism Act 2011) as Members. If an Authority did not have two Independent Persons of its own, it would have to look to other Authorities for its Independent Person Panel members.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The report be noted.
2. Dr Stuart Green and Lyn Ryan be appointed as Independent Persons; and that
3. Their term of office commences with immediate effect i.e. from 29 January 2020, and expiring on the 29 January 2024.
4. The reappointment of Jeff Bell be confirmed for a period of six months to ensure a smooth transition to the new appointees.

8 Planning for the Future

At its meeting on 6th June 2018 Council approved the introduction of a Managing Director and Deputy Managing Director model as part of the transitional arrangements for the planned departure of the Chief Executive.

The Deputy Managing Director post was to be appointed to from the members of the Corporate Management Team in accordance with the Council's usual procedures. Following the appointment of an interim Managing Director in June 2019 and the permanent Managing Director appointment in September 2019 it was proposed that appointment to a Deputy Managing Director post was not progressed and that the Directors would act as deputy to the Managing Director as required.

It was considered that this proposal provided the necessary senior management capacity and flexibility as well as providing personal development opportunities for the Corporate Management Team. The proposal would be a continuation of the working arrangements which had been in place since June 2019 and had worked well. The Corporate Management Team had been informally consulted and were supportive of the proposal.

The proposal would deliver further financial savings to the significant senior management reductions already achieved as the addition of Deputy Managing Director responsibilities would be absorbed in to the current Directors' roles and responsibilities. This would achieve savings of between £5,000 to £25,000 per annum (depending on which Director would have been appointed to the Deputy post).

RESOLVED that the appointment to a Deputy Managing Director post is not progressed and that the current Director roles and responsibilities are extended to include acting as Deputy Managing Director as required.

9 Appointments and Amendments to Committees, Panels and Other Bodies for the Municipal Years 2019/23

At its Annual Meeting, held on Wednesday 22 May 2019, the Council approved appointments to its Committees, Panels and Joint/Outside Bodies for 2019/23.

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

Corporate Parenting Board

Remove - Cllr Marilyn Surtees (Labour)

Add - Cllr Bob Cook (Labour)

RESOLVED that the above amendment be agreed.

Vacancies on the General Licensing Committee and Statutory Licensing Committee had arisen. The vacancies were seats that the Labour Group was entitled to hold but, at this stage, it had indicated that it only wished to fill two of the vacancies and details were provided below.

General Licensing Committee and Statutory Licensing Committee

Remove – Cllr Jean O'Donnell (Labour)

Add – Cllr Marilyn Surtees (Labour)

RESOLVED that the above amendment be agreed.

Moved by Councillor Bill Woodhead MBE, seconded by Councillor Maurice Perry that Councillor Andrew Sherris be appointed to the General Licensing Committee for the Municipal Years 2019 - 2023.

Moved by Councillor Tony Riordan, seconded by Councillor Sally Ann Watson that Councillor Ted Strike be appointed to the General Licensing Committee for the Municipal Years 2019 - 2023.

At this point a vote took place.

RESOLVED that Councillor Andrew Sherris be appointed to the General Licensing Committee for the Municipal Years 2019 – 23.

Moved by Councillor Bill Woodhead MBE, seconded by Councillor Maurice Perry that Councillor Andrew Sherris be appointed to the Statutory Licensing Committee for the Municipal Years 2019 - 2023.

Moved by Councillor Tony Riordan, seconded by Councillor Sally Ann Watson that Councillor Ted Strike be appointed to the Statutory Licensing Committee for the Municipal Years 2019 - 2023.

At this point a vote took place.

RESOLVED that Councillor Andrew Sherris be appointed to the Statutory Licensing Committee for the Municipal Years 2019 – 23.

10 Motion

The following motion had been submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12.1. The motion was moved by Councillor Steve Nelson, seconded by the Worshipful the Mayor:-

“This Council supports the Bright Minds Big Future Big Committee in their work with the British Youth Council and the Chris Cave Foundation to develop a campaign to raise awareness in the borough about the dangers associated with knife and gun crime. This Council supports the Big Committee in their work to raise awareness of the devastating effects of violent crime and to deter young people from carrying a knife or a gun or committing violent crime in any shape or form.”

Netanya Alwis (Big Committee) was in attendance and with the permission of the Worshipful the Mayor was given opportunity to address the meeting. Netanya spoke about the dangers of knife and gun crime and the work of the Big Committee.

A vote took place on the motion. The motion was unanimously carried.

11 Members' Question Time

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

“At a previous meeting of Council a question was raised about how much was spent on events around the Borough. Ingleby Barwick had the princely sum of £140.

Can the Leader of the Council outline what this money was spent on and what his Cabinet are proposing to do to make spending on events across the Borough spread more evenly?

I appreciate the High Street is totally different because of the major events that are held there.”

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

“In our previous response we estimated costs for events in each town but we identified some costs, such as barrier hire, that were not specific to a single event. These non-specific costs were divided across all the towns. This accounts for the £140 figure for Ingleby Barwick.

In some cases the event support is for small or straightforward events, like Remembrance Sunday services, and the costs are integrated to a wider programme cost.

In relation to the commitment to make event spending more evenly spread, we have begun a review of sites, potential partners, opportunities and ideas for each town. This initial research also will give us a better idea of the limitations and challenges as our towns don't all have spaces or facilities suitable for some types of event. Our aim is to explore what might be possible across the Borough.

We will not have capacity to develop or run a programme of concurrent events across all 6 towns, but we can work with local partners and support regular smaller scale activity as well as staging larger one-off events.

We have already developed the model of events 'on tour' around the Borough, in the first instance taking the Singing Christmas Tree out of Stockton Sparkles and using it to enhance Christmas events in Yarm, in 2018, and Billingham, in 2019. The Singing Tree is expected to be used in Thornaby in 2020. We have also begun to explore the potential for the 'Speakeasy' community event which started in Stockton, to be established in other towns. ”

Councillor Ted Strike asked the following supplementary question:-

“Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council should begin to reduce the massive imbalance on money spent on events in different towns and stop charging Ingleby Barwick Town Council to erect and dismantle and store their artificial Christmas tree each and also to pay for the steel barriers. Will the Leader of the Council agree to cancel this invoice that is currently due and agree not to charge for future years that will save Ingleby Barwick Town Council approximately £1000 per year and then the money can be spent on providing facilities for our residents? I'm led to believe the tree at Yarm is erected and

dismantled free of charge.”

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

“Unfortunately even as Leader of the Council I can’t agree to this as Cabinet and Council agree spending but if you write in to me, officers will look at that, I can’t comment on what happens in Yarm as I don’t have that information but officers can find out. Prior to the meeting IBIS have met with me to look at what events can be brought to Ingleby Barwick so it might be a chance for you to also come to see me as my door is always open to all Councillors but as I say I can’t agree as Leader of the Council to any none spending.”

The following question had been submitted by Councillor Ted Strike for response by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing:-

“Have SBC secured the purchase or long term lease of Tesco field in Ingleby Barwick?”

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing responded with:-

“A straight answer to a straight question is no.”

Councillor Ted Strike asked the following supplementary question:-

“If Tesco refuse to allow Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council to use the field, what are the Council’s plans? Will this mean Ingleby Barwick gets no improvements out of the £30 million regeneration budget or will the Council ring fence some money and look at some alternatives? And why has the Council used the field in their consultation documents so visibly if they can’t guarantee that Tesco will allow them to use it?”

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing responded with:-

“The Council is committed to working with Tesco and other stakeholders in Ingleby Barwick and indeed all of the Borough’s town centres to look at how the public and private sector can work together to further develop our towns. The public consultation is still ongoing and we must wait and see what the key themes from that are before we decide what the most appropriate solutions in each of our towns are. The illustrations provide a vision of what may be possible to aid the public during that consultation. We will await the outcome of the consultation to see where we are then.”

Members were informed that as Councillor Julia Cherrett was not in attendance at the meeting she would receive a written response to her question.

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

“Political pundits agree that the result of the General Election was largely determined by people who felt that they weren’t being listened to.

Does the Leader of the Council agree that arrogant disregard of genuine public opinion in any form or over any matter – e.g. consultation, referenda - is an affront to the spirit of democracy?”

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

“Democracy through the elections process allows electors to decide who should govern and be held accountable for decisions that are made.

Properly conducted referenda and consultations give people a voice which we have a responsibility to listen to in reaching our decisions. The consultation process we are undertaking at the moment across all of our town centres is a prime example of how we go about this.”

Councillor Steve Walmsley asked the following supplementary question:-

“Given that a referendum in Thornaby and Yarm overwhelmingly registered a desire for separation from Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, both of which have been disregarded, would the Leader of the Council reconsider his indifference or would he perhaps favour a second referendum?”

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

“I’m not sure if you are going for some sort of record of asking the same question in different ways at every Council meeting. As I said at the last meeting, the referendum you had in Thornaby wasn’t a full referendum, you missed off the question of where Thornaby would like to go, local government boundaries commission look at which Council would be best for that area, they have to look at all the services that the Councils provide, it is a costly exercise and it is estimated to have cost Yarm Town Council £150k and you won’t beat the first class services that Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council provides. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council has won awards and the Mori poll that is carried out shows what a top Council Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is. You can’t just carry out a postal vote you also need to have polling stations open to have a referendum and Thornaby didn’t. The referendum as I have said also didn’t actually ask the right questions.”

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

“When planning permission was approved for housing development east of Bassleton Beck into Thornaby adjacent to Low Lane / Thornaby Road, officers and Chair of Planning failed to grasp the difference between green wedge and a town boundary – effectively allowing developers to re-shape the town of Thornaby on Tees for what they no doubt perceive to be a more financial advantageous address. When TIA complained, we were advised to wait for the forthcoming boundary review to determine the matter. Will the Leader of this council support Thornaby’s claim to turn over what is an insulting annexation of a part of our town?”

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

“Decisions that are made by Members of the Planning Committee or indeed planning officers through the scheme of delegation must always base those decisions on national and local planning policies, not ward or town boundaries (historic or otherwise). We do, however, use ward boundaries as one part of the consultation process. As Councillor Walmsley is aware the independent boundary commission are planning to start a review across the Borough and any views on boundaries, current or historic, can be fed into that process for due consideration by that independent commission. Until you get some sort of submission I can’t say whether or not we would support that submission. We would look to consider if we could support any sort of submission that TIA would like to submit to the Local Boundary Commission.”

Councillor Steve Walmsley asked the following supplementary question:-

“It is quite a simple thing that we would put in, that is the boundary just accept it. It was interesting to see that at the appeal the inspector appointed recognised the significance of Bassleton Beck green wedge as the boundary between Thornaby and Ingleby Barwick. Yet we have got planning officers and the Chair of the Planning Committee that didn’t seem to recognise that. The elimination of the green wedge that the Secretary of State seems to have done doesn’t eliminate the boundary, why can’t they understand that?”

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

“I’m not quite sure of who set the boundary but it wouldn’t be planning officers, but as I said in the answer to the original question, they have to base their decisions on national and local planning policy not on boundaries of towns. The actual planning application was turned down by this Council but approved by the national inspector when it went to appeal. As I say if we would look to consider if we could support any sort of submission that TIA would like to submit to the Local Boundary Commission.”

The following question had been submitted by Councillor Luke Frost for response by the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Health, Leisure and Culture:-

“Recently it was announced at the Health and Well-being Board that a new Framework for Physical Activity was to look at ways of increasing Physical Activity for those within the six priority groups set out in the framework. With that being said, Thornaby Pool, which is a superb “swimmers” pool is in need of investment within the changing facilities to encourage more adults to take up swimming. Currently the facilities are lacking in cubicles and from my own experience I don’t like the idea of adults, children and young people getting showered and changed within what is a room. Can we invest in changing facilities to make the pool more accessible for all?”

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Health, Leisure and Culture responded with:-

“As the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board I’m well aware of the Physical Activity Framework that we agreed. I think that there is a bit a spurious link

between that which is a bit more encompassing and making this link with Thornaby Pool but so saying I shall answer the question particularly about Thornaby Pool.

Stockton Council continues to subsidise Thornaby Pool through its contract with Tees Active and also to invest in the fabric of the building. We recently funded a new boiler system and we continue to undertake repairs and maintenance on a cyclical basis.

As Councillor Frost acknowledges, Thornaby Pool is a superb swimmers pool, different in character from Splash with its wave machine and shallow pools. Thornaby is well used by Schools and clubs and we continually review safeguarding procedures. Schools are able to use the private group changing rooms and Tees Active manage the programme of use carefully. We do not believe there is any safeguarding risk associated with the current changing arrangements. However, various options are being explored for the long term use of the site, which could potentially be included in the Thornaby Town Deal bid.”

Councillor Luke Frost asked the following supplementary question:-

“During the period of 2018/19 some 108,000 people used Thornaby Pool my worry is that with the new leisure facility at Ingleby Barwick soon to come on-line people will be turned off by the changing facilities at Thornaby and turn people towards the new facility at Ingleby Barwick?”

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Health, Leisure and Culture responded with:-

“That is an impressive figure of use and I don’t know how you are going to increase on that, I would celebrate that and its contribution to the Physical Activity Framework. Yes I think the situation does need careful monitoring when the Ingleby Barwick leisure facility opens and Tees Active will need to look at that. As I said before there are adequate changing facilities and it hasn’t stopped 108,000 people using the pool. There are limited private cubicles at Thornaby Pool for people who are modest and don’t want to change in a communal single sex area. Thornaby Pool would benefit from investment but the questions is where do you get the resources from? And I put that question back to you as a Thornaby Councillor, there is hopefully a large sum of money coming that way and that there may be an opportunity there to address the issues that you have raised.”

The following question had been submitted by Councillor Luke Frost for response by the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Health, Leisure and Culture:-

“It was revealed that 26% of the population here in Stockton have not used or accessed a park. We have many great parks around the Borough and it is a shame that a large percentage of people are not taking advantage of our green open spaces. What are we as a Council doing to encourage the use of our parks and is there a possibility that better lighting schemes could be introduced to promote using our parks on an evening and through the darker winter

months?”

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Health, Leisure and Culture responded with:-

“We are pleased to acknowledge that three quarters of our population use local parks, the figure nationally is only 57%, but as high performing Council we are accustomed to being significantly better than average. That is not to say that it is not an issue to encourage even more people to use our parks.

We continue to invest in our parks, retaining their quality and cleanliness and supporting groups like the Friends of Ropner Park, and the Friends of Preston Park to run events and encourage use of our parks by other local groups. We stage numerous events in parks, from Park-runs and nature walks to festivals and arts installations.

There is a possibility that better lighting could promote use of some parks in winter and I emphasize the word “some” and where that comes up in consultations around park development plans, we try to respond to it. There is no closed mind to it but there is a down side to putting lighting in parks, there are practical limits on how much of parks can be lit sufficiently and there are very real resource implications. We might also consider the carbon footprint if we were to light all our parks at night. Also there is experience elsewhere of the extra lighting causing anti-social behaviour and I know from my own ward of Roseworth where we have a pocket park, an outdoor gym and a MUGA our residents didn't want them lit too late and they were turned off accordingly because of the concern of them becoming a focus for anti-social behaviour.”

Councillor Luke Frost asked the following supplementary question:-

“In terms of lighting attracting anti-social behaviour I would like to invite Councillor Beall to come and walk any street in Thornaby on an evening, every street is filled with anti-social behaviour. I would much prefer for a park to be used for the right reasons and similarly for adults who work long hours during the day to still have the opportunity to go and exercise and enjoy the parks as a carbon neutral opportunity as we do have solar panels and wind energy.”

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Health, Leisure and Culture responded with:-

“I'm not sure that is a shared view from people across this town and if Members would support a proposal of that sort. When there is a consultation about parks, that could come into that consideration and local people could input into that and hopefully there could be a local solution to that issue but I would not support a universal proposal to light up all our parks after dark. In fact many people want the gates locking up never mind lighting up.”

The following question had been submitted by Councillor Luke Frost for response by the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Health, Leisure and Culture :-

“Tourism is once again on the agenda of all local authorities across the Tees

Region. We have one of the greatest assets criss-crossing the Borough and it is in my view greatly underused, that asset being the River Tees. Whilst efforts to utilise the River are very few and far between is it not time that we look at utilising this attraction to bring in both domestic and international tourists?"

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Health, Leisure and Culture responded with:-

"I think you have got this one wrong. I will speak from my own experience initially. Many of you know that my wife and I live on the river, overlooking it and I can see from there a hive of activity. We see from our own window there are walkers, dog walkers, joggers, Park Runs (400 participating a couple of weeks ago), cyclists (2 wheels and 1), scooters and anglers at the side of the river; on the river, I see rowers, canoeists, kayakers, water-skiers and jet-skiers particularly on Sundays, as well as pleasure boats, dragon boats and the Teesside Princess. There is a hive of activity on our river. If you had asked this question 20 years ago you would have been right.

The statement that efforts to use the river are few and far between doesn't stand up to scrutiny. There are angling clubs, rowing clubs, kayaking clubs and open water swimming clubs, there is the Teesside Princess and Juno taking passengers up and down. The Tees Barrage International White Water Course is a world class attraction used by thousands, and now used by filmmakers from Hollywood as well.

The River Tees Rediscovered project has been running for 5 years and has introduced thousands of people to the flora, fauna and history of the river. Further funding for River Tees Rediscovered has just been agreed. Pathways along the river corridor have been invested in and improved, long-distance paths have been signposted and promoted. Canals and Rivers Trust have worked with the Council to remove more debris and clean up the banks.

Companies like Rivershack have introduced boat hire opportunities. The Council has invested in pontoons and moorings and taken control of the Wharf at Yarm. The Tees River Users Trust manage the water sports centre and stage events like the Regatta that attracts crews from as far afield as Aberdeen and Nottingham. The Council has supported events like the Dragon Boat Race and the River Rat Race that get people involved in activity on the water, as spectator or participant. Rat Race was filmed and broadcast in a number of international jurisdictions, presenting the River to audiences across the world.

Our efforts to attract more visitors to the area are also being given a major boost by the investment in the Enjoy Tees Valley campaign. Councillors might like to visit the Enjoy Tees Valley website to see how prominently the River Tees and Stockton attractions feature in this powerful online resource."

12 Forward Plan and Leader's Statement

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

Council had last met in November and since then Cabinet met on the 11 December 2019 and the 23 January 2020 and considered the following matters:

- The 2019 Events round-up and the memorial lighting calendar for 2020
 - Council owned companies board membership
 - The Financial update and Medium-Term Financial Plan
 - The Local Government Boundary Commission Electoral Review of the Borough
 - The Learning and Skills Service Annual report
 - The Children's Service performance update
 - The School performance report for vulnerable pupils
 - The Stockton-Darlington Railway bi-centenary proposals
 - The Economic Climate up-date
 - The Scrutiny review of Domestic Abuse and its impact on children
 - The Scrutiny Review of the protection of vulnerable older residents living at home
 - The Scrutiny Review of the Area Transport Strategy
 - The Scrutiny review of Obstructive and Illegal Parking around Whitehouse Primary School
 - The Independent Safety Advisory Group – Annual Report
- And
- The Indigenous Growth Fund update

Looking ahead, Cabinet would next meet on the 20 February 2020 and consider reports on:

- The MTFP and the Budget for 2020/21
 - An update on Office Accommodation
- And
- An update on the reshaping of town centres

The Leader of the Council looked forward to seeing Members at the next meeting of Council on 26 February 2020.