

Council

A meeting of Council was held on Wednesday, 27th January, 2021.

Present: The Worshipful the Mayor (Cllr Mohammed Javed), Cllr Cllr Helen Atkinson, Cllr Louise Baldock, Cllr Chris Barlow, Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Pauline Beall, 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 John Gardner, Cllr Ray Godwin, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Stefan Houghton, Cllr Barbara Inman, Cllr Eileen Johnson, Cllr Paul Kirton, Cllr Tina Large, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr David Minchella, Cllr Mick Moore, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Ross Patterson, Cllr Maurice Perry, 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); Margaret Waggott, Nigel Hart, Michael Henderson, Sarah Whaley, Peter Bell (DS); Becky Brown, Julie Butcher (HR,L&C), Garry Cummings (FDBS), Ann Workman (AS), Martin Gray (ChS), Reuben Kench (ECLE), Richard McGuckin (TCI), Jamie McCann (CS).

Also in attendance: Members of the Public.

Apologies: Cllr Jackie Bright, Cllr Tony Hampton, Cllr Lauriane Povey and Cllr Laura Tunney.

C Welcome

42/20

The Worshipful the Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined the arrangements for the meeting.

C Declarations of Interest

43/20

There were no interests declared.

C Minutes

44/20

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2020.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 18 November be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

C Public Question Time

45/20

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

C Supplementary Planning Document Adoption – SPD No.1 - Housing Supplementary Planning Document and SPD No.2 - Householder Extensions and Alterations Supplementary Planning Document

46/20

Council noted that Supplementary Planning Documents No.1 - Housing Supplementary Planning Document and No.2 - Householder Extensions and Alterations were presented to the Council's Planning Committee on 11th March 2020 to provide comments for Cabinet to consider. The SPDs were also endorsed by Cabinet on the 19th March 2020 who recommended that Council adopt the documents. However, the subsequent Council meeting was cancelled following the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Council noted that a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provided guidance on how Local Plan policies were applied and were a material consideration when determining applications for planning permission within the Borough. Two SPDs, the Housing SPD and Householder Extensions and Alterations SPD have been published for public consultation. In order to address the comments raised during the consultation, the documents had been amended where appropriate.

The SPDs (Appendix A and B), the Communities Impact Assessments (Appendix C) Consultation Statement (Appendix D) and Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report (Appendix E), were available on the Council's internet agenda system and in the Members Library. The Consultation Statement includes the schedule of comments received during the consultation period on the draft versions of the SPD, alongside the Council's response.

Council was now recommended to adopt these documents so that they can be used in the determination of planning applications. However, further to an amendment to the Cabinet report, the documents would only be applied to new planning applications which were submitted following adoption of these Supplementary Planning Documents.

Council was also recommended to approve the adoption of these documents as Council policy, subject to minor editing and changes that be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing and the Director of Finance and Business Services.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The contents of the report be noted.
2. SPD No.1 Housing Supplementary Planning Document and SPD No.2 Householder Extensions and Alterations Supplementary Planning Document be adopted; and
3. Delegated authority to approve non-material and minor alterations to the SPDs be given to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing, and the Director of Finance and Business Services, prior to publication.
4. The existing SPD2 Householder Extension Guide, SPG 4 High Density Development: Flats and Apartments and SPD 8 Affordable Housing will apply to those planning applications current and valid on the date of adoption. Once those applications have been determined those SPDs will be superseded and replaced. The new SPD 1 and 2 will immediately apply to those planning applications received after the date of adoption.

C 47/20 **Members Allowance Scheme – Report of Independent Remuneration Panel**

Council was provided with details of the Independent Members' Allowances Remuneration Panel's report with a view to making any recommendations for the Council's Members Allowance Scheme for 2021/22.

The rationale in respect of the proposed increase of the Councillors basic allowance was summarised, along with the rationale behind the proposed re-balancing of the Chair/Vice Chair SRA allowance.

Moved by Councillor Bob Cook, seconded by Councillor Jim Beall that there be no changes made to the Council's Members Allowance Scheme for 2021/22.

Moved by Councillor Tony Riordan, seconded by Councillor Lynn Hall that the substantive motion be amended as follows:-

“The recommendations No. 1 & 2 in the report to be replaced with the following amendment:-

1. The Panel recommends that the basic allowance for members should remain at £9300 for the year 2021/22.
2. The Panel recommends that the current Special Responsibility Allowance for a Committee Chair & Vice Chair should be amended:
 - Chair is reduced from the current £6250 to £3125
 - Vice Chair allowance to be abolished and fall in line with the other three local authorities in Cleveland.

There is no proposed amendments to Recommendations 3 & 4 as in the report.”

A vote then took place on the amendment to the substantive motion.

The amendment to the substantive motion was not carried.

A vote then took place on the substantive motion.

The substantive motion was carried.

RESOLVED that there be no changes made to the Council's Members Allowance Scheme for 2021/22.

C
48/20

Motion

The following motion had been submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 3.40 moved by Councillor Louise Baldock, seconded by Councillor Steve Nelson:-

“Stockton on Tees Borough Council supports the current £20 uplift to Universal Credit. We ask that it is extended beyond the planned March end date, in an attempt to minimise the effects of poverty. We call on the Chancellor to recognise that the removal of the £20 will cause financial distress to many families and ask for the status quo to continue.

This Council resolves to:

1. write to the Chancellor urging him to continue the current £20 uplift in Universal Credit; and

2. write to both Stockton MPs requesting they lobby the Government on this matter.”

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 3.65 Councillor Norma Stephenson requested that a recorded vote be taken; which was supported by at least a quarter of the members present:-

Members in favour of the motion:-

Cllr Helen Atkinson, Cllr Louise Baldock, Cllr Chris Barlow, Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Pauline Beall, 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 Clare Gamble, Cllr Ray Godwin, Cllr Barbara Inman, Cllr Mohammed Javed, Cllr Eileen Johnson, Cllr Paul Kirton, Cllr Tina Large, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr David Minchella, Cllr Mick Moore, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Ross Patterson, Cllr Maurice Perry, Cllr Andrew Sherris, Cllr Michael Smith, Cllr Norma Stephenson O.B.E, Cllr Mick Stoker, Cllr Ted Strike, Cllr Marilyn Surtees, Cllr Steve Walmsley, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Paul Weston, Cllr Bill Woodhead MBE and Cllr Barry Woodhouse.

Abstentions:-

Cllr Luke Frost, Cllr John Gardner, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Stefan Houghton, Cllr Stephen Richardson, Cllr Tony Riordan, Cllr Hilary Vickers, Cllr Matthew Vickers, Cllr Alan Watson, Cllr Sally Ann Watson and Cllr Julia Whitehill.

The motion was carried.

**C
49/20**

Motion

The following motion had been submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 3.40 moved by Councillor Alan Watson, seconded by Councillor Sally Ann Watson:-

“This Council publishes the figures for allowances and expenses incurred by Councillors on an annual basis. In the published figures for the year 2019/20 these figures were;

Basic allowance £499,800.00

Special Responsibility Allowance £196,885.82

Travel £1,084.87

Total £697,770.69

No figures were recorded against, subsistence or carer's allowance.

Unfortunately the travel figures do not describe this expense further.

A recent disclosure by the Council has shown that some members have claimed additional expenses for travel and hotels, which haven't been recorded and

published against their names.

This amounted to a further £2567.20. for the local taxpayer.

The Council were unable to be sure if the additional expenditure was the full amount paid by the local taxpayer, due to the manner in which these expenses are recorded.

This Council will ensure all expenses incurred by Councillors, and paid for by the local taxpayer, will be properly recorded, and the details outlining all of the expenses be published for the year 2019-2020 and going forward into future years.”

Moved by Councillor Bob Cook, seconded by Councillor Jim Beall that the substantive motion be amended as follows:-

- a) After “A recent disclosure by the Council has shown that some members..” remove rest of paragraph and substitute “..have undertaken Council duties, involving travel and hotels, which have been arranged by Officers and haven’t been recorded on the claims system and published against members’ names.”
- b) Delete final paragraph and replace with:
“This Council will ensure all expenses incurred by Councillors, and paid for by the local taxpayer, will be fully recorded, and the details outlining all of the expenses be published annually from 2020-2021.”

If agreed, the substantive motion to read:

“This Council publishes the figures for allowances and expenses incurred by Councillors on an annual basis. In the published figures for the year 2019/20 these figures were:

Basic allowance £499,800.00

Special Responsibility Allowance £196,885.82

Travel £1,084.87 Total £697,770.69

No figures were recorded against, subsistence or carer’s allowance.

Unfortunately, the travel figures do not describe this expense further.

A recent disclosure by the Council has shown that some members have undertaken Council duties, involving travel and hotels, which have been arranged by Officers and haven’t been recorded on the claims system and published against members’ names.

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This Council will ensure all expenses incurred by Councillors, and paid for by the local taxpayer, will be fully recorded, and the details outlining all of the expenses be published annually from 2020-2021.”

At this point a vote took place on the amendment to the substantive motion.

The amendment to the substantive motion was carried.

C
50/20 **Members' Question Time**

The following question has been submitted by Councillor Luke Frost for response by the Leader of the Council:-

“With all 343 Councils in the land moving to online meetings due to the pandemic, some took the decision early on to stream their meetings online using Social Media to allow members of the public to hear and see how Councils conduct business, our closest example being Middlesbrough, can we look at doing similar given that our meetings are due to carry on in this format until the AGM?”

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

“The current Government regulations that permit Authorities to hold remote meetings (The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels(Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020) are in place until the 7th May 2021; and whilst no indication has been received as yet as to whether these will be extended, many anticipate that it would seem likely.

Members of the public have always had the option to hear and see how Council business is conducted as they are advised that they are welcome to attend any public meeting of the Council, Cabinet or its Committees. This right is not affected by the current pandemic as clear advice and instruction is provided on the Council’s website, reiterated on each agenda summons, advising members of the public who wish to attend a meeting to make contact with our Democratic Services Section who will arrange for them to be provided with the remote meeting link. This practice has up to now worked satisfactorily with members of the public regularly attending meetings of the Planning Committee most notably.

The Council’s policy towards public streaming meetings of Council, Cabinet and its Committees was last reviewed in March 2017. Up until that time, meetings of Council, Cabinet & the Planning Committee were recorded and then hosted on the Council’s website; and this had been the case since 2014. The viewing figures for such meetings were however extremely modest, and when taking into account the costs involved at that time to be able to do so; a decision was taken that the practice of recording meetings cease with effect from the 2017/18 Municipal Year.

By way of a supplemental question Cllr Frost asked the Leader to look at how the council engages with the electorate

The Leader of the Council replied that ”with the current arrangements for remote access working satisfactorily, I see no reason to make any further change at this point.”

Forward Plan and Leader's Statement

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

The Council last met (virtually) as a full Council on the 18th November 2020, since then Cabinet had met twice, first on the 17th of December and then on the 21st January when it considered the following matters:

- An update on plans for the 2021 Census
- An update on the 2020-2023 Council Plan
- A report on the annual procurement plan and higher value contracts
- An update on the Indigenous Growth Fund
- An update on the Sycamores Development and proposals for the Elm House site
- A progress report on the migration of the Local Land Charges register
- An update from the Bright Minds Big Futures Committee
- The Annual memorial lighting calendar
- An update on the Medium Term Financial Plan
- The Learning and Skills Service Annual Review
- Reports on the adoption of Supplementary Planning Documents and the review of the Members Allowance Scheme
- And reports from the Scrutiny reviews of:
 - o Business Support and Engagement
 - o The Local Council Tax Support Scheme
 - o Public Consultation
 - o The cost of school uniforms
 - o Fly Grazed horses
 - o and
 - o Planters in residential streets

Looking ahead, Cabinet would next meet on the 18th of February and consider :

- The Medium Term Financial Plan and
- A report of the development of our Town Centres

After that the Leader of the Council looked forward to seeing Members at the next meeting on the 24th of February.

Until then the Leader of the Council hoped that everyone all stayed safe and well and hope that there would some improvement in the Covid situation.

The Council was continuing to keep a close eye on the local position and to respond and adapt the services as required. Things continued to be very serious here in the Borough at the moment and the pressure on our local health services was very severe. The latest dashboard published on the SBC website showed that the Borough sadly recorded another 21 deaths in the Borough in the last 7 days.

As Members were aware the Leader of the Council chaired the weekly Local Outbreak Engagement Group where they reviewed all the measures that the Council was taking to encourage compliance with the Covid restrictions and to ensure that the Council was providing clear Covid advice, information and

guidance. The Council would keep using every approach that it could identify and the Leader of the Council took the opportunity to thank Members for the work they were doing to support this and for their help with the communication of key messages and information.