

Council

A meeting of Council was held on Wednesday, 23rd March, 2022.

Present: The Worshipful the Mayor (Cllr Kevin Faulks), Cllr Helen Atkinson, Cllr Louise Baldock, Cllr Chris Barlow, Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Robert Cook, Cllr Nigel Cooke, Cllr Evaline Cunningham, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr Lisa Evans, Cllr Dan Fagan, Cllr Clare Gamble, Cllr John Gardner, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Stefan Houghton, Cllr Barbara Inman, Cllr Niall Innes, 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 Lauriane Povey, Cllr Andrew Sherris, Cllr Michael Smith, Cllr Lee Spence, Cllr Norma Stephenson O.B.E., Cllr Mick Stoker, Cllr Hugo Stratton, Cllr Ted Strike, Cllr Steve Walmsley, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Alan Watson, Cllr Sally Ann Watson, Cllr Paul Weston, Cllr Julia Whitehill and Cllr Bill Woodhead MBE.

Officers: Julie Danks (MD); Michael Henderson, Peter Bell, John Devine (DS); Beccy Brown, Jonathan Nertney (HR,L&C), Emma Champley (AH), Reuben Kench (CL&E).

Also in attendance: Members of the Public.

Apologies: Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Jacky Bright, Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Luke Frost, Cllr Ray Godwin, Cllr Steve Matthews, Cllr Javed Mohammed, Cllr Maurice Perry, Cllr Marilyn Surtees, Cllr Stephen Richardson, Cllr Tony Riordan, Cllr Laura Tunney, Cllr Hilary Vickers and Cllr Barry Woodhouse.

C Welcome

66/21

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

C Declarations of Interest

67/21

There were no interests declared.

C Minutes

68/21

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 26 January and 23 February 2022.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 January and 23 February 2022 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

C Public Question Time

69/21

The following public question had submitted by Samantha Spence for response by the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport:-

"What initiatives or schemes are available to schools and colleges to help support them with recycling and becoming more eco-friendly?"

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport responded with:-

"Thank you for your question on recycling and attending the Council meeting tonight. It's great to hear that the schools are passionate about the environment and recycling.

There are a number of national initiatives and schemes that schools would be able to take advantage of and all have a large amount of resources and guides for schools and pupils regarding waste and recycling.

Organisations such as Eco-Schools, who are passionate about engaging young people in environmental education and action, can provide eco-schools green flag accreditation and Recyclenow who work with experts and the Government can provide resources to help make a real, sustainable impact on recycling behaviour. I can arrange for the Strategic Waste Officer to provide a list of websites for the school to look into.”

Samantha Spence asked the following supplementary question:-

“If there are none, when will a scheme or initiative be implemented to support the 84 education establishments across Stockton with recycling?”

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport responded with:-

“There are a number of initiatives and schemes which schools could get involved in however I am also aware of work that officers are currently working on a Greener Governance Campaign to be rolled out to all schools in the summer which requires governors and trustees to act on climate change and environmental sustainability. This work is expected around June 2022, and more details will follow on this closer to the time.”

**C
70/21**

Council Plan 2022-25

Consideration was given to a report that presented the draft Council Plan for 2022-25.

The Council Plan set out the vision for the Borough looking forward to 2025, and the key priorities the Council would be working on in the coming year.

The Plan outlined what the Council wanted the Borough to be:

- A place where people are healthy, safe and protected from harm
- A place that is clean, vibrant and attractive
- A place with a thriving economy where everyone has opportunities to succeed

The Council Plan was attached to the report.

RESOLVED that the Council Plan 2022-25 be approved.

**C
71/21**

Amendments to Committee Membership

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.

In accordance with the Local Government (Committee and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 (as amended), notice had been received that two, previously non-grouped independent members of the Council, have formed a new political group. As a consequence, the new group, which will be known as Billingham West and Ingleby Barwick East Independents must be considered in terms of

political proportionality, on Council Committees.

A recalculation of each committee had revealed that the group was entitled to one position on the Council's Executive Scrutiny Committee.

The position had been discussed with relevant groups and the following amendment was required.

Executive Scrutiny Committee

Remove Councillor Paul Kirton from the membership and replace with Councillor Ted Strike.

RESOLVED that the required change as detailed above be agreed.

C
72/21

Motion

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

“Stockton-on Tees borough has a long and proud record of welcoming refugees seeking asylum and the British public has indicated in recent polls that they would welcome a refugee resettlement plan in response to the tragic humanitarian events in Ukraine with 76% in favour and only 11% opposed.

The UK Government's response to date has not reflected the wishes of the public and compares poorly in comparison with the EU response. Ukrainian refugees will have the right to live and work in the EU for up to three years initially without the need to go through lengthy asylum procedures. In comparison, the Government's response has been confusing and over bureaucratic including retaining the need for visas though following intense criticism this requirement has now been waived for “immediate” family members.

The Government response to the Ukraine crisis appears to be an extension of the deeply concerning policies and attitudes underpinning the Nationality and Borders Bill currently going through Parliament.

The Ukrainian crisis offers the opportunity for the Government to review both its response to the current crisis and its overall approach to those seeking asylum. Consequently, this Council resolves to write to the Home Office and seek the support of both our MPs to urge the Government to:

1. Review its response to the Ukrainian crisis so that it better meets the extreme urgency of the situation and better reflects the wishes of the public.
2. Withdraw the Nationality and Borders Bill, which has been condemned by numerous agencies, including the United Nations Refugees Agency, and work with local authorities and communities to build a fairer and more effective asylum system

3. If the Government refuses to withdraw the Bill, urge it to accept all the amendments proposed in the House of Lords to mitigate the deeply concerning implications of the Bill in its current form, namely:
- a) Delete clause 9, which would allow the Government to deprive someone of their citizenship without notice;
 - b) Delete clause 11 that provides for refugees to be treated differently based on how they travel to the UK;
 - c) Allow asylum seekers the right to work if their claim has not been completed after six months;
 - d) Remove offshore detention provisions from the Bill;
 - e) Allow unaccompanied children in Europe to be reunited with family in the UK while they claim asylum;
 - f) Commit to an annual resettlement of 10,000 refugees;
 - g) Remove the part of the Bill that would criminalise those entering the UK to claim asylum.

4. That the Government formally requires all local authorities to take their fair share of adult asylum seekers, as they have effectively done with unaccompanied children, and to finally provide pro rata funding to local authorities to both encourage councils' engagement and provide necessary financial support to fulfil their obligations."

Moved by Councillor Lynn Hall, seconded by Cllr Niall Innes that the substantive motion be amended as follows:-

"Stockton-on-Tees borough has a long and proud record of welcoming refugees seeking asylum and the British public has indicated in recent polls that they would welcome a refugee resettlement plan in response to the tragic humanitarian events in Ukraine with 76% in favour and only 11% opposed.

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is saddened and disturbed by the unprovoked aggression against Ukraine, which has caused horrific devastation, and created an escalation humanitarian crisis with millions displaced or affected. In light of this, and as a way of expressing support for the people of Ukraine and members of our community who are from or who have ties with Ukraine this Council;

- a. Condemns the unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine and stands in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and their families and friends, including those local to Stockton.
- b. Stands ready to provide support and open our arms to innocent people displaced and affected by this unprovoked Russian aggression.
- c. Will work with and support the efforts of our local communities to provide help, support and comfort to those in need."

Following a debate a vote took place and the amendment was not carried.

No further amendments were moved so a vote then took place on the substantive motion.

The substantive motion was carried as follows:-

“Stockton-on Tees borough has a long and proud record of welcoming refugees seeking asylum and the British public has indicated in recent polls that they would welcome a refugee resettlement plan in response to the tragic humanitarian events in Ukraine with 76% in favour and only 11% opposed.

The UK Government’s response to date has not reflected the wishes of the public and compares poorly in comparison with the EU response. Ukrainian refugees will have the right to live and work in the EU for up to three years initially without the need to go through lengthy asylum procedures. In comparison, the Government’s response has been confusing and over bureaucratic including retaining the need for visas though following intense criticism this requirement has now been waived for “immediate” family members.

The Government response to the Ukraine crisis appears to be an extension of the deeply concerning policies and attitudes underpinning the Nationality and Borders Bill currently going through Parliament.

The Ukrainian crisis offers the opportunity for the Government to review both its response to the current crisis and its overall approach to those seeking asylum. Consequently, this Council resolves to write to the Home Office and seek the support of both our MPs to urge the Government to:

1. Review its response to the Ukrainian crisis so that it better meets the extreme urgency of the situation and better reflects the wishes of the public.
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3. If the Government refuses to withdraw the Bill, urge it to accept all the amendments proposed in the House of Lords to mitigate the deeply concerning implications of the Bill in its current form, namely:
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 - f) Commit to an annual resettlement of 10,000 refugees;
 - g) Remove the part of the Bill that would criminalise those entering the UK to claim asylum.
4. That the Government formally requires all local authorities to take their fair share of adult asylum seekers, as they have effectively done with unaccompanied children, and to finally provide pro rata funding to local authorities to both encourage councils’ engagement and provide necessary financial support to fulfil their obligations.”

C Members' Question Time

73/21

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

C Forward Plan and Leader's Statement

74/21

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

Members last met as a full Council on the 23rd February to agree the Medium Term Financial Plan and Budget. Since then Cabinet met on the 17th March when it considered the following matters:

- The Scrutiny Review report on the review of the Local Government Pension Scheme
- The Annual Auditors Report for 2020/21
- The RIPA Inspection Report
- The 2022/23 Annual Procurement Plan and Higher Value Contracts report
- A progress update on the Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities Strategy
- The Environmental Sustainability & Carbon Reduction Strategy for 2022-2032
- A report on the Tees Valley Waste Project

Cabinet would next meet on the 21st April and then again on the 19th May before Members met again as a full Council. At these meetings Cabinet was scheduled to consider:

- An update on the Fairer Stockton on Tees Framework
- The draft Stockton-on-Tees Inclusive Growth Strategy, following consultation with key stakeholders and partners
- An update on the Thornaby Town Deal
- The recommendations from the Children and Young People Select Committee Scrutiny Review of Child Poverty
- The recommendations from the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee Scrutiny Review of Day Opportunities for Adults.
- The Annual Public Sector Equality Duty report.

After that the Leader of the Council looked forward to seeing Members at the Annual Meeting at the Forum Theatre in Billingham on the 25th May.