# Council

A meeting of Council was held on Wednesday, 22nd March, 2023.

**Present:** The Worshipful the Mayor (Cllr Ross Patterson); 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 Ken Dixon, Cllr Lisa Evans , Cllr Dan Fagan, Cllr Kevin Faulks, 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 Steve Matthews JP, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr Mick Moore, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Maurice Perry, Cllr Lauriane Povey, Cllr Stephen Richardson, Cllr Tony Riordan, Cllr Michael Smith, Cllr Lee Spence, Cllr Norma Stephenson O.B.E, Cllr Mick Stoker, Cllr Hugo Stratton, Cllr Ted Strike, Cllr Marilyn Surtees, Cllr Laura Tunney, Cllr Hilary Vickers, Cllr Steve Walmsley, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Paul Weston, Cllr Bill Woodhead MBE and Cllr Barry Woodhouse.

**Officers:** Mike Greene (CE), Ged Morton, Julie Butcher, Judy Trainer, Peter Bell, John Devine (CS), Garry Cummings, (F,D&R&DCE), Martin Gray (ChS), Reuben Kench (CS,E&C), Ann Workman (A&H).

**Also in attendance:** Members of the public.

**Apologies:** Cllr Helen Atkinson, Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Luke Frost, Cllr Niall Innes, Cllr Mohammed Javed, Cllr David Minchella, Cllr Andrew Sherris, Cllr Alan Watson, Cllr Sally Ann Watson and Cllr Julia Whitehill.

## C 74/22 Welcome

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

## C 75/22 Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared.

## C 76/22 Minutes

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meetings held on 25 January 2023 and 22 February 2023.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 25 January 2023 and 22 February 2023 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

## C 77/22 Public Question Time

The Head of Legal Services reported that there were no Public Questions.

## C 78/22 Constitution Update

Consideration was given to a report on the updated Constitution.

All Local Authorities in England had a statutory duty under the Local Government Act 2000 to maintain an up-to-date Constitution and to make their Constitution publicly available.

The Monitoring Officer, on behalf of and in consultation with the Chief Executive, had a responsibility under paragraph 1.37 of the Constitution to monitor and review the Constitution on a regular basis and has delegated authority to make changes to the Constitution, to, amongst other minor

changes, reflect the Council's structures and decision-making requirements.

The proposed changes to the Constitution and the reasons for each proposed change was specified within a table in the report.

A tracked-changes version of the Constitution highlighting the amendments referred to in the report was available on the Members area of the Intranet.

RESOLVED that the amendments specified in the table in the report and shown in tracked changes in the draft amended Constitution be approved and the amended Constitution agreed.

**C 79/22 Council Plan 2023-26**

Consideration was given to a report on the Council Plan 2023-2026.

The report presented a draft Council Plan for 2023-26.

The Council Plan set out our vision for the Borough looking forward to 2026, and the key priorities the Council would be working on in the coming year to do our part in bringing the vision to life.

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 2023-2026 be approved.

**C 80/22 Local Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document**

Consideration was given to a report on the Local Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document.

A Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provided guidance on how Local Plan policies were applied and would be a material consideration when determining applications for planning permission within the Borough.

This "Local Design Guide" SPD had been prepared as part of a suite of guidance documents that expanded on policies within the adopted Local Plan (2019). The Local Design Guide SPD and accompanying technical appendices (Appendices A – E to the report) were intended as a guide for the design of development sites, with an aim to improving the quality of design within development proposals.

The Local Design Guide SPD and accompanying technical appendices had

been published for public consultation and the documents had been amended where appropriate based on the consultation comments received.

It was recommended to adopt the SPD to be used in the determination of planning applications from the point of adoption. If adopted this SPD would supersede and replace existing planning guidance.

The SPD had been prepared in accordance with Government legislation and guidance and had been subject to public consultation in accordance with regulations. Comments raised had been considered and, where necessary adjustments to the documents had been made. It was therefore recommended that the documents, as amended and attached at Appendix A to E of the report be adopted.

Following adoption, the documents would be made available in the Council's main offices, on the Council's website and in public libraries across the Borough. The SPD would be a material consideration in planning applications. Members were also made aware that legislation made provision for individuals / organisations to pursue a legal challenge regarding SPDs, and this would end 3-months after adoption of the documents.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The contents of the report be noted.

2. The Local Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document and its accompanying technical appendices be adopted.

3. The authority to approve non-material and minor alterations to the SPD and its accompanying technical appendices be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing, and the Director of Finance, Development and Regeneration, prior to publication.

4. The Local Design SPD will apply to all planning applications submitted to the Council after the adoption date and the following Supplementary Planning Documents will be superseded:

- Supplementary Planning Document 1: Sustainable Design Guide
- Supplementary Planning Guidance: High Density Development: Flats and Apartments
- Supplementary Planning Document: Shop Front Design and Advertisements
- The following elements of Supplementary Planning Document: Open Space, Recreation and Landscaping:
- 8) Landscaping on development sites
- Appendix 2- Planting within Stockton-on-Tees
- Appendix 3- Tree protection
- Appendix 4: Tree planting specification for softscape areas

**C 81/22** **Motion**

The following motion had been submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 3.40, moved by Cllr Ted Strike, seconded by Cllr Steve Matthews:-

"This Council supports the provision of free to attend events for our residents and visitors. Wherever possible this should be at no cost to council taxpayers. Council requests Cabinet to consider sponsorship opportunities to offset either in part or fully the costs of the Stockton International Riverside Festival."

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

"This Council supports the provision of free to attend events for residents and visitors to the borough. This Council requests that Cabinet and officers continue to seek out all forms of funding, including sponsorship opportunities, to minimise the costs of events such as Stockton International Riverside Festival for the council taxpayer whilst at the same time ensuring that major sources of funding are not jeopardised and the financial viability of said event is not put at risk.

This Council also encourages any businesses or organisations which might wish to sponsor any of the Council's events to make contact."

Following a debate a vote took place and it was agreed that the amendment be carried and therefore the amendment became the substantive motion.

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

The substantive motion was carried as follows:-

"This Council supports the provision of free to attend events for residents and visitors to the borough. This Council requests that Cabinet and officers continue to seek out all forms of funding, including sponsorship opportunities, to minimise the costs of events such as Stockton International Riverside Festival for the council taxpayer whilst at the same time ensuring that major sources of funding are not jeopardised and the financial viability of said event is not put at risk.

This Council also encourages any businesses or organisations which might wish to sponsor any of the Council's events to make contact."

**C 82/22** **Motion**

A motion had been submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 3.40 by Cllr Kevin Faulks. Council noted that Councillor Faulks proposed to alter his motion and the proposed wording had been circulated. The request to alter the motion received the meeting's consent and that consent was signified without discussion.

The following motion was moved by Cllr Kevin Faulks, seconded by Cllr Ken Dixon:-

“Since 2016, Council Tax has risen in the region of 30% across Councils in England. This includes the Social Care Levy being added to fund social care provided by local authorities, comprising around half of the 30% increase. In 2011-12 around 60% of funding of local authorities in England was provided by central government, with around 40% funded from Council Tax. In 2022-23, 60% of council funding is provided by Council Tax with around 40% funded by government. Council’s annual budgets for 2022-23 have not increased in line with inflation since 2010/11, with large expenditure reductions and staff redundancies made from 2011 to 2015. Inflation 2011 to 2023 is 35.4% (Bank of England Calculator).

In 2016, Councils were advised by government that increases in government funding for Councils was unlikely, but that government is giving Councils spending power, by allowing them to increase Council Tax and the Social Care Levy annually within limits set by government each year. The resulting increases to both of these taxes since 2016 has left Council Taxpayers facing large bills which are effectively becoming a second mortgage on their property for some homeowners. Some of our residents have told us ‘this is not sustainable and it is like having a second mortgage’. The impact upon Council Taxpayers could be reduced if local government services are funded by a greater proportion from central government, as it has a range of taxes which could fund local government, and therefore lessening the impact on Council Taxpayers.

Therefore, the Council resolves to write to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, His Majesty’s Leader of the Opposition, the MP’s for Stockton North and Stockton South, and the Local Government Association, to ask them to:

1. Support a real terms increase to grant funding allocated to local government since 2010-11 giving Councils the opportunity to reduce Council Tax levels.

2. Ask government and future governments to provide local government with a long-term fair funding package from government based on the medium term, so that councils can plan service provision and minimise Council Tax rises.

3. Ask government to introduce funding for both adults and children’s social care that fully funds the costs of delivering these services, without putting the cost onto local taxpayers so that Councils can remove the Social Care Levy on Council Taxpayers.”

Following a debate a vote took place.

The motion was carried.

**C 83/22** **Members' Question Time**

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

“Can you confirm that my amendment to this year's budget would have resulted in a balanced budget?”

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

“The alternative budget proposed at Council on 22nd February 2023 produced a balanced budget for 2023/24 but I need to qualify that as if we had accepted that budget we would lost £1.4 million Arts Council grants for 3 years for the SIRF festival and the festival of Thrift so in the end we would have actually lost money.”

Councillor Ted Strike asked the following supplementary question:-

“If it was a balanced budget how could Cllr Nelson’s comment about losing £300k for 3 years be true so therefore it wouldn’t be a balanced budget and the amendment should have never been allowed?”

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

“We would have lost £1.4 million and we would also have lost the two festivals for 3 years and probably forever as the Arts Council were funding these events. The £300k you are talking about is the cost of the festival as if you don’t have them, you will still need to spend that money.”

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

“Can the council advise me of the current cost of rebuilding Splash, also what is the estimated cost of demolishing Splash?

How much is still owed on the current Splash facility?

And what do the Council intend to do with the land, how much do they expect to receive for the land if they sell it?”

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing responded with:-

“The current approximate cost for delivering a new leisure centre at the Stockton Waterfront Development is £15m as set out in the report to Cabinet in July 2021. Work is ongoing to progress the design stage of the new leisure facility and therefore update the project cost. There has been some initial design work to RIBA stage 2 undertaken and we are currently working through the procurement exercise to appoint the architect for the detailed design work. We will have final designs and cost details in the summer and then there will be a

further report to Cabinet.

The original Splash build was funded through lottery and other grant funding, the extension costed £2.7m in 2008 which was funded through a combination of SBC resources, Sport England Grant and prudential borrowing. The timing of when the Council takes out external borrowing is driven by cashflow requirements and the treasury management strategy, we do not enter into individual loans for specific schemes.

Options for the future use of the existing Splash site, as well as the other sites vacated as a result of the moves to Dunedin House, are being considered alongside the Council's asset strategy. Any costs associated with the future use, including potential demolition costs will be identified as part of this work. This work is also covering the asset value of the existing site and all of this will be brought back to Cabinet."

Councillor Ted Strike asked the following supplementary question:-

"The figure of £15 million is obviously 2 years old now and the cost of building materials etc have now gone through the roof. Therefore, the figure is more likely to be a 40% increase in cost so until we find out the full cost, I sincerely hope that this Council are going to put this on-hold and not jump straight in and bring something back to full Council?"

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing responded with:-

"Cllr Strike has clearly little understanding of project management. I'm certainly not going to speculate in a meeting where there are members of the public and press about the future costs. In my original answer I said we would be bringing a report back to Cabinet once we have a programme of costs. That is the process we apply to all of our schemes. A new modern fit for purpose and efficient leisure centre on the new Stockton waterfront development will provide the best value for money use of a brownfield site. Also, it's close proximity to the NHS Diagnostic Centre and access to cycleways, walkways and the new wellbeing hub is something we would all welcome. This Labour Cabinet and Group is delivering on the Council Plan that was approved earlier this evening, we have a clear vision unlike Cllr Strike and the Conservative Group."

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

"Can the leader please outline what training has been provided to members of this council in managing budgets, negotiating, and securing major grant funding, recruitment of senior officers, delivering projects with schools and communities, negotiating contracts, and finally the designing of community spaces?"

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

"Members have a personal responsibility to identify their own personal support and development needs.

This Council provides a range of training opportunities for new and existing members through the induction programme which will run later this year, following the elections.

The programme has been put together incorporating the views of elected members through feedback received after the last induction programme, the Members Advisory Panel and Cabinet. The programme is there to ensure that members are able to fully discharge their role as elected councillors.

There is a requirement for members sitting on some of our committees to undertake mandatory training in the role of those committees, for example the planning committee or Licensing Committees or the Appointments Panel.
It is important for us all, as elected members, to recognise that the role of members and the role of officers is different but complementary. Our protocol on member officer relations helps explain this.

With the exception of the recruitment of senior officers, where there is a defined role for the appointment panel and where members must have mandatory training, the other areas for training raised in this question are operational topics, for which the responsibility to give professional advice and procedural guidance to members rests with officers.

It would therefore be unusual if members were raising a need for the training mentioned in the question within their personal development needs. Clearly through cabinet and member briefings, and the advice provided at committees, members are provided with the professional support and guidance they need to undertake their roles and make decisions."

Councillor Tony Riordan asked the following supplementary question:-

"If I could take you to a Facebook page belonging to IBIS and its updates to the Stockton and Darlington Bicentenary celebrations dated 8 February this year. It says "We IBIS have a budget £1.3 million from SBC" that's not true, it also says "We IBIS have just got confirmation of significant grant from the lottery which includes work in Darlington as well Stockton and we are IBIS finalising a £1 million contribution from the TVCA, we IBIS are also receiving funding from the Arts Council, and we IBIS are in the process of recruiting Bicentenary Director". My question talks about recruitment of senior officers and what training members have had, IBIS don't take part in any recruitment of any senior officers within this Council, they are not on any Appointment Panels and yet they are reporting of residents of Ingleby Barwick. It would have been easier if IBIS had said this is a straight lift from the SBC website but they have made out that they have done all of these things."

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

"You are obviously staring your election campaign early. You are trying to say that IBIS Councillors are not representing their residents. For the last 18 years IBIS have been securing investment for Ingleby Barwick by working in

partnership with other groups and officers. I think you are mixing up the role of SBC Officers and SBC Councillors. As Councillors we have to make an informed decision, Council officers are highly skilled and work many hours and one area they have recently been successful is the case for the NHS Diagnostic Centre and thanks to the vast majority of Councillors the plans have been backed for the Castlegate redevelopment which means that Stockton can offer a brand new facility which was one of the factors in the bid. If it was left to the Conservative Group there would be no Castlegate development, no Globe, no hotel and no NHD Diagnostic centre."

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

"Can the leader of the council advise me what finances, if any were allocated from Stockton council's budget to the building of All Saints school and Ingleby Manor free school?

This does not include the extension of All Saints."

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

"All Saints Church of England started 01.09.2003 and all costs were funded via the PFI scheme, there was no Council budget allocated to the scheme.

Ingleby Manor Free School started 01.09.2014 in a temporary building then moved to current site. All costs for the school were funded by Government, the was no Council budget allocated to the scheme."

**C 84/22** **Forward Plan and Leader's Statement**

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

Council last met on 22 February 2023 to consider the Medium-Term Financial Plan and set the Council Budget. Since then, Cabinet had met on 23 February and 16 March when it considered the following matters:

- 12 Month Update from Bright Minds Big Futures.
- The Annual Report of The Independent Safety Advisory Group.
- Public Space Protection Order.
- School Governor appointments.
- Scrutiny Reviews of Contextual Safeguarding and Youth Relationships, Tree Asset Management, Home Energy Efficiency and Green Jobs for The Future and Development Management and Adoption of Open Space.
- Council Plan 2023-2026.
- Social Value Policy.
- Annual High Value Procurement Plan.
- Events and Cultural Activity Programme for His Majesty King Charles Coronation.
- Levelling Up Fund, round 1.

- Inclusive Growth.
- Local Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document

The Leader of the Council took the opportunity to thank those Members who had decided not to seek re-election to the Council in the elections in May and thanked them for the service they had given to their residents.

The Leader of the Council also reflected on the last four years in which the Council had had to tackle a pandemic which all SBC officers and employees went above and beyond to ensure that the Council was able to deliver services to residents, and the Leader of the Council took the opportunity to thank them.

The Council had also been able to move forward as in planning investments to all the town centres and schools a £57m capital programme of investment in the schools so the young people of the Borough had schools they could be proud of to be able to learn in.

The Globe and the Hilton Hotel had opened and from recent reports were doing well. All Members could be proud that despite the pandemic the Council had been able to have a successful four years.

On the weekend immediately after the elections, there were the celebrations for the coronation of His Majesty the King, there was town centre big lunch event, local street parties or other exciting events and activities. The Leader of the Council hoped everyone had an enjoyable time celebrating this significant national event.

The next meeting of Council would be on 24 May at the Forum Theatre in Billingham.