

Council

A meeting of Council was held on Wednesday, 26th July, 2023.

Present: The Worshipful the Mayor (Cllr Jim Beall), Cllr Stefan Barnes, Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Michelle Bendelow, Cllr Marc Besford, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Diane Clarke O.B.E, Cllr Robert Cook, Cllr Nigel Cooke, Cllr John Coulson, Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Richard Eglington, Cllr Lisa Evans, Cllr Kevin Faulks, Cllr Jason French, Cllr Nathan Gale, Cllr Clare Gamble, Cllr John Gardner, Cllr Ray Godwin, Cllr Alex Griffiths, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Elsi Hampton, Cllr Stefan Houghton, Cllr Shakeel Hussain, Cllr Barbara Inman, Cllr Niall Innes, Cllr Eileen Johnson, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr Mick Moore, Cllr Sufi Mubeen, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Ross Patterson, Cllr David Reynard, Cllr Stephen Richardson, Cllr Tony Riordan, Cllr Paul Rowling, Cllr Susan Scott, Cllr Vanessa Sewell, Cllr Andrew Sherris, Cllr Norma Stephenson O.B.E, Cllr Mick Stoker, Cllr Hugo Stratton, Cllr Ted Strike, Cllr Marilyn Surtees, Cllr Emily Tate, Cllr Jim Taylor, Cllr Hilary Vickers, Cllr Marcus Vickers, Cllr Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Alan Watson, Cllr Sally Ann Watson, Cllr Paul Weston and Cllr Barry Woodhouse.

Officers: Mike Greene (CE), Julie Butcher, Jonathan Nertney, Judy Trainer, Peter Bell, John Devine (CS), Garry Cummings, (F,D&R&DCE), Elaine Redding (ChS), Reuben Kench (CS,E&C), Carolyn Nice (A&H).

Also in attendance: Members of the public.

Apologies: Cllr Dan Fagan, Cllr Laura Tunney and Cllr Katie Weston.

C **39/23** **Welcome**

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

C **40/23** **Declarations of Interest**

There were no interests declared.

C **41/23** **Minutes**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2023.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2023 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

C **42/23** **Minute's Silence – Honorary Alderman Bill Noble**

Members were aware that Honorary Alderman Bill Noble had sadly passed away.

The Worshipful the Mayor outlined that Bill served as a Councillor in the Hardwick Ward for 16 years from 1995 until 2011 and sat on numerous committees, including as Vice-Chairman of the Executive Scrutiny Committee.

Bill also served as Mayor of the Borough in 2007/2008 and was awarded Honorary Alderman status in 2015.

The awarding of his Honorary Alderman status was a fitting tribute to the contribution Bill made over a number of years.

Bill would be a huge miss and condolences were given to his widow Kath and his family at this very sad time.

The Leader of the Council paid tribute to Bill's work as a councillor and that Bill always represented the people of his ward passionately and with the utmost dedication.

As a mark of respect Members stood in a minute's silence.

C
43/23

Public Question Time

The following question was submitted by John McDermottroe for response by the Leader of the Council:-

"Given that it has been almost 2 years since announced, when will the due diligence on buying Billingham Town Centre be complete & when is a subsequent purchase likely to go ahead?"

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

"Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful in the Levelling Up bid for Billingham Town Centre which was based around Council ownership, demolition, and re-purposing parts of the Town Centre.

The Council remains committed to supporting redevelopment of the centre, as evidenced through resourcing the emerging masterplan and is in ongoing dialogue with the centre owner as to their future plans for the centre and how resource can be best utilised to bring about redevelopment of the centre."

John McDermottroe asked the following supplementary question:-

"I don't think the answer was given to my question , when will the due diligence be complete and when is the purchase of the town centre?"

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

"I have explained that it was part of the Levelling Up bid to purchase the town centre and we missed out on that. Although I have been told that there is another Levelling Up bid coming forward but I'm not sure of the dates for the bid although I would have thought it would be before the next general election. So therefore, the purchasing of the town centre would be part of any future Levelling Up bid.

Cabinet looked at a masterplan for the town centre to see where we go from here. We have put money aside from the Council's budgets of £10 million for the town centre but obviously we need to find which way forward we can go through the masterplan and how best we can finance the rest of the scheme and the re-development of the town centre."

C
44/23

Appointments to Committees and Panels

Consideration was given to a report that reviewed the allocation of seats to political groups as prescribed by the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990.

At the Annual Meeting on 24 May 2023, Council appointed to Committees, Panels etc, in accordance with the Constitution and statutory political balance requirements. Committee size was set out in the Council's Constitution. However, in the case of Executive Scrutiny, the size and political balance of that committee could not be determined until Council had appointed a committee chair and the chairs of each select committee. The Council's constitution, para 2.37, stated:-

"The Executive Scrutiny Committee will be comprised of a Chair appointed by Council, plus the Chairs of the 5 thematic Select Committees, together with such other Members as are necessary to achieve political balance".

A recalculation had been made and a total membership of 12 was required comprising 5 Conservatives, 5 Labour (the appointed chairs of Selects) and 1 Thornaby Independent (the appointed Exec chair) and 1 Ingleby Barwick Independents Association. Appendix A to the report set out the revised membership of Executive Scrutiny Committee for approval.

Following the recent Hartburn election, a recalculation of the political balance of all Council committees had taken place and in accordance with that, Appendix B to the report sets out the wishes of political groups in the filling of seats for approval.

In addition, Appendix C to the report highlighted the outstanding vacancies yet to be filled by the Council.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The following revised membership of the Executive Scrutiny Committee be approved:-

Remove:-

Cllr Ian Dalgarno
Cllr Stefan Houghton
Cllr Barbara Inman
Cllr David Reynard
Cllr Vanessa Sewell
Cllr Marcus Vickers
Cllr Alan Watson
Cllr Sally Ann Watson
Cllr Barry Woodhouse

Add:-

Cllr Niall Innes

Cllr Lynn Hall
Cllr Sufi Mubeen
Cllr Laura Tunney

Final Membership of the Executive Scrutiny Committee:-

Cllr Pauline Beall
Cllr Marc Besford
Cllr Carol Clark
Cllr Richard Eglington
Cllr Lynn Hall
Cllr Niall Innes
Cllr Sufi Mubeen
Cllr Ross Patterson
Cllr Tony Riordan
Cllr Marilyn Surtees
Cllr Laura Tunney
Cllr Sylvia Walmsley

2. The following revised memberships be approved:-

Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee
Remove - Cllr Emily Tate
Add - Cllr Lynn Hall

Crime and Disorder Select Committee
Remove - Cllr Hugo Stratton
Add - Cllr Jason French

People Select Committee
Remove - Cllr Sufi Mubeen
Add - Cllr Niall Innes

Place Select Committee
Remove - Cllr John Coulson
Add - Cllr Andrew Sherris

Audit and Governance Committee
Remove - Cllr Tony Riordan
Add - Cllr Susan Scott

Planning Committee
Remove - Cllr John Coulson
Add - Cllr Lynn Hall

General Licensing Committee
Remove - Cllr David Reynard
Add - Cllr Jason French

Statutory Licensing Committee
Remove - Cllr David Reynard

Add - Cllr John Coulson

Health and Wellbeing Board
Remove - Cllr Tony Riordan
Add - Cllr Diane Clarke

Corporate Parenting Board
Remove - Cllr David Reynard
Add - Cllr Alex Griffiths

Home Safety Association
Remove - Cllr John Gardner
Add - Cllr Sufi Mubeen

River Tees Port Health Authority
Remove - Cllr Vanessa Sewell
Add - Cllr Lynn Hall

TVCA Scrutiny Committee
Remove - Cllr David Reynard (As named substitute for Cllr Tony Riordan)
Add - Cllr Lynn Hall (As named substitute for Cllr Tony Riordan)

TVCA Audit and Governance Committee
Remove - Cllr Tony Riordan (As named substitute for Cllr David Reynard)
Add - Cllr Niall Innes (As named substitute for Cllr David Reynard)

Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee
Remove - Cllr Sufi Mubeen
Add - Cllr Lynn Hall

3. The following appointments be made to the outstanding vacancies:-

Schools' Workforce Joint Consultative Committee - Cllr Vanessa Sewell
The Spence Bequest - The Worshipful the Mayor, Cabinet Member for Health
Leisure & Culture and the Chair of People Select Committee

C
45/23 **Motion**

Cllr Niall Innes informed the meeting that he would not be moving his motion and therefore the motion was treated as having been withdrawn.

C
46/23 **Members' Question Time**

The following question was submitted by Cllr Ray Godwin for response by the Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport:-

“The state of our road infrastructure both nationally and locally is crumbling, I see this every day in my professional role as a driver of a large goods vehicle and also have it reported daily from residents within my ward.

Given that additional to individual taxation, that the amount of Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) collected by national government last year was around £7.1 billion (2021/22) up from £6.9 billion the previous year and fuel duty is at the highest levels ever, averaging between £24.3 billion and £25.9 billion per year between 2021 / 2023 equivalent to £867 per household per year or 0.9 per cent of national income.

What is the allocated amount of funding to this council from central government for the repair and maintenance of the roads in our borough and could you supply a rough estimate on what this borough would actually require to not only patch potholes but to repair and resurface our roads to a standard expected by motorists and residents in our communities?”

The Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport responded with:-

“The highway infrastructure asset is the most valuable single asset owned by the Council and is vital to local economic prosperity and resident’s quality of life. The 2021/22 budget allocated by the Government to Stockton Council to maintain these assets was £3,296,143. However, this budget has to cover footpaths, bridges, streetlights, traffic signals and other infrastructure, as well as carriageways. In 2021/22 the budget from Government available for roads in Stockton on Tees was £1,576,996.

Using a nationally recognised calculator for road maintenance, to maintain a ‘steady state’ in respect of carriageway condition, Stockton’s roads require a budget allocation of £3,200,000 per annum. This shows that Stockton’s road repairs represent a funding gap of approximately £1.62m per annum.

However, in terms of our performance with the resources available, based on national benchmark indicators, SBC are doing a better job than most Local Authorities.

According to the 2022 The National Highways & Transport Public Satisfaction Survey;

- Speed of repair to damaged roads 4% above the national average, ranked 23 out of 111, and in first quartile.
- Quality of repair to damaged roads 4% above the national average, ranked 26 out of 111 and in first quartile.
- Condition of Road Surface 3% above the national average ranked, 40 out of 111 and in second quartile.

This isn’t a problem that only faces us here in Stockton and in response to the shortfall our carriageway maintenance programme is managed on a needs basis and has been restricted to dealing with those sections of carriageway most in need of attention, with preventative maintenance being reduced.

Councils up and down the country including Conservative Councils are managing decline in terms of the state of their roads. Despite suffering from funding shortage, we are still maintaining a good position nationally. You mentioned about exercise duty and petrol duty, there is a Transport Committee

that is led by a Conservative MP Ian Stewart and they have looked at the potential shortfall because a very small percentage of that is used to maintain our roads. The other thing that they haven't yet looked at is the impact across the country is as we move away from petrol and diesel vehicles the impact on fuel exercise duty and the how we manage that shortfall which will be in the millions."

Cllr Ray Godwin asked the following supplementary question:-

"Thank for the comprehensive response. Just to clarify out of the £33 billion taken in by this government £1.6 million is allocated to this Council. On this basis can I assure my ward residents that it is not postcode lottery regarding road repairs like some Councillors have alluded to but one of lack of national funding? "

The Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport responded with:-

"I can absolutely assure you Councillor Godwin that it is not the case of a postcode lottery and it is managed on a needs basis."

The following question was submitted by Cllr Marcus Vickers for response by the Leader of the Council:-

"Will the Council consider recording, live-streaming and uploading meetings online, for greater public engagement and transparency in our local democracy?"

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

"Council meetings are open to the public and anyone who wishes to do so may attend. The issue of streaming meetings was adopted previously for Council, Cabinet and Planning Committee but there was little public engagement at that time. Analysis identified that the lowest number of recorded views for a Council meeting was 16. A review took place in 2016 and the cross-party Members Advisory Panel recommended that the recording and streaming of meetings be ceased with effect from 2017/18."

Cllr Marcus Vickers asked the following supplementary question:-

"If not for democracy then can I ask that it be considered that the meetings are recorded only for the security and safety of officers and members from bullying, intimidation, rude and inappropriate behaviour?"

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

"There's nothing wrong with recording meetings but the costs for recording meetings were about £15k per year and as I said the Members Advisory Panel recommended that the recording of meetings cease with effect from 2017/18 and the reason for that was the value for money aspect. £15k is a lot for the views of about 16 people but I have nothing against the recording of meetings. You can't do something like this on the cheap, it has to be done professionally.

We could look at it again at the Members Advisory Panel and see what the costs would be and take from there possibly.”

The following question was submitted by Cllr Ted Strike for response by the Leader of the Council:-

“Can the Leader of the Council tell me what actions have been taken to remove the hotel business from the Teesside Pension fund so that these accounts are stand alone and SBC are never put in the embarrassing position of having a "Strike Off" notice imposed on the hotel again.

Did SBC receive any financial penalties for receiving this notice?”

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

“The auditing of the group accounts was delayed because of the technical matter relating to the Teesside Pension Fund, but the Hotel Company was not part of the Pension Fund. The Hotel Company has already procured the services of an independent auditor and submitted its separate audited accounts to Companies House. Stockton Council didn't receive any financial penalties for this notice. ”

Cllr Ted Strike asked the following supplementary question:-

“Can you assure Members that this won't happen again next year and the audited accounts will be in on time for the hotel.”

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

“The four in the Tees Valley area are hoping that the delayed accounts won't happen again, it was because of the Teesside Pension Fund and I do believe that the issue is now moving forward and hopefully they will use independent auditors for the hotel next year and therefore the issue will be resolved.”

The following question was submitted by Cllr Ted Strike for response by the Leader of the Council:-

“One of the benefits of the council's franchise with the Hilton group is the Hilton's website which directs people to the nearest Hilton hotel, as well as the Hilton Honours scheme.

Can the Leader of the Council advise me of the percentage of guests who stayed at the hotel were members of the Hilton Honours scheme?”

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

“The proportion of guests registered as members of Hilton Honours Scheme is commercially sensitive information and we weren't able to get hold of that information from the Hilton Group.”

Cllr Ted Strike asked the following supplementary question:-

“If the Hilton Hotel did not allow us to renew our franchise when the current franchise is up, what contingency plans does the Council have in place and how big will the financial impact be on the hotel?”

The Leader of the Council responded with:-

“This is not really related to the first question, and it is something we would have to look into so sorry I can’t answer that question.”

C 47/23 Forward Plan and Leader’s Statement

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

Council last met on 21 June 2023. Since then, Cabinet met on the 13 July and considered the following matters:-

- Medium-Term Financial Plan - Draft Outturn March 2023
- Powering our Future
- Vibrant and Thriving Town Centres - Regeneration Update
- Indigenous Growth Fund Update
- Senior Management Capacity
- Volunteering Policy
- Electoral Update
- Modern Slavery Statement
- Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Report in the Public Interest
- Xentrall Annual Report 2022/23

Cabinet would next meet on the 14 September 2023 and is scheduled to consider:

- Financial Update and report on the Medium-Term Financial Plan (2023/24 Quarter 1)
- Overview and Scrutiny - End-of-Term Report 2019-2023
- Selective Licensing of Private Rented Housing (scheme proposal)
- Corporate Parenting Strategy

Before that, the Leader of the Council was looking forward to lots of great events over the Summer in the Borough. SIRF begins on the 3 August. This year’s official launch show was the spectacular ‘Perceptions’ by Bivouac. The show would start at 7pm on Friday 4 August. There’s also the popular Teddy Bear’s picnic in Preston Park later in August.

After that the Leader of the Council looked forward to seeing Members all at the next full Council meeting on the 20 September.

