

MEETING OF MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

At the Meeting of Middlesbrough Council, lawfully convened, and held in the Town Hall, Middlesbrough on 6 January 2016.

PRESENT: Councillors Bloundele (Chair), The Mayor, D Budd, Councillors Arundale, Biswas, Blyth, Brady, Carr, Cole, Coupe, Cox, Culley, Davison, Dean, Goodchild, Harvey, Hellaoui, Higgins, C Hobson, J Hobson, Hubbard, Hussain, Lawton, Lewis, McCabe, McGee, McGloin, McIntyre, G Purvis, P Purvis, Rathmell, C M Rooney, D Rooney, Rostron, Saunders, Shan, J Sharrocks, Taylor, Thompson, N J Walker, Walters and Young

OFFICERS: L Henman, A Hoy, J Lewis, S Lightwing, A Pain, K Parkes, B Roberts, M Robinson, J Shiel and P Slocombe

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were submitted on behalf of Councillors Brunton, Dryden, Mawston, McTigue, Uddin and J A Walker.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Name of Member	Type of Interest	Item/Nature of Interest
Councillor Saunders	Disclosable Pecuniary Interest	Agenda Item 13 - Final Approval of Taxi Fees Following Consultation - Report of the Executive Director Economic Development and Communities

1 MINUTES - COUNCIL - 25 NOVEMBER 2015 AND 9 DECEMBER 2015

The minutes of the meetings of Middlesbrough Council held on 25 November and 9 December 2015 were submitted and, subject to three minor amendments, approved as a correct record.

2 ANNOUNCEMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS

The Chair referred to letters received from the Local Government Association and the Department for Business Innovation and Skills in relation to Motion 116 Trade Union Bill. Copies had been circulated to all Members prior to the Council meeting for information.

NOTED

3 PETITION

The Chair, on behalf of the Council received a petition from residents of Linthorpe requesting a speed reduction on Burlam Road from 30 mph to 20 mph. The lead petitioner addressed the Council seeking the Council's support to improve the present situation.

The Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for Regeneration acknowledged receipt of the petition and agreed to contact the relevant Officers to ascertain whether any assistance could be given.

Moved, seconded and **ORDERED** that the petition be received, noted and forwarded for consideration.

4 MAYOR'S STATEMENT AND REPORT

The Mayor stated that the detailed information in relation to the Local Government Finance Settlement had not yet been received and in particular details of the Public Health Grant for the next four years had not been confirmed. The Mayor thanked the Chief Finance Officer and his staff for the work completed to date on the settlement, given the short timescale. The previously agreed three year strategy plan and financial projections seemed reasonably accurate at this stage.

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) faced a 56% cut to budgets over the next four years and the Revenue Support Grant, currently £35 million, would reduce to nil by 2020/2021. This would be a significant change in the way Local Government would be funded and was in addition to the £54 million in cuts since 2010. The Mayor commented that, as in previous years, the reductions were starkest in the most disadvantaged areas.

Local Authorities' overall spending power had reduced by 0.5% over the four year period. However, for Middlesbrough the reduction was 3.8%. If Middlesbrough had received the average reduction throughout the country, this would have meant £4.1 million less in cuts. Budget reductions of £33 million would be required from 2017 over 3 years, which was in addition to £14 million next year.

The Mayor also highlighted the Government's proposal to increase Council tax by 2% to provide additional funding for adult social care and commented that it was essential for Middlesbrough to provide care for the most elderly residents. The Medium Term Financial Plan assumed a further almost 2% Council tax increase as part of the budget for 2016/2017. Consideration would need to be given to those people negatively impacted by Welfare Reform changes. The Chair confirmed that Members' Briefings would be arranged to provide the detailed information prior to the budget setting.

The Mayor stated that a lot of things were happening in Middlesbrough that should be celebrated. The creation of the Combined Authority and devolution would develop the Tees Valley as a vibrant city region, with decisions made at the centre. The national media usually referred to Middlesbrough as a city and in fact, it was a University city.

There had already been an expansion in hotel facilities in the town, with more to come. The restaurant offer was also improving and expanding and whilst there were still some retailers who were not present in the town, future developments might help attract them. Visitors from Middlesbrough's twin town, Oberhausen in Germany, had commented that having a University made a huge difference to a town. More graduates were staying in Middlesbrough and creating new businesses which gave a different feeling to the area.

The new Dock Bridge and the possibility of a Snow Centre were good examples of how improved infrastructure could lead to re-development. The Tees Advanced Manufacturing Park, developments in Bedford and Baker Streets, improvements to Albert Road and house building numbers at record levels were also highlighted.

The Tour De Yorkshire would be a huge opportunity to showcase Middlesbrough and the Tees Valley. As a Combined Authority, the development of an industrial and commercial strategy was a pre-requisite for everything else. The Mayor also commented on recent improvements to rail transport and the likelihood of Middlesbrough soon having a Premier League football team.

The Mayor urged all Councillors to sell the University City of Middlesbrough and its future to everyone and encourage children in Middlesbrough schools to fulfil their ambitions in the town. It was also important to link people to the available job opportunities.

In conclusion, the Mayor called on all Elected Members to play a part in improving Middlesbrough and ensuring it was not defined by its deprivation issues. Several Members commented in support of the Mayor's statement.

5

DEPUTY MAYOR AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER REPORTS

The Chair invited Members to raise items for general discussion arising from the Information Booklet of Executive Member reports, previously circulated, which detailed activities carried out within the respective Executive Member portfolios (Section 1), Executive decisions taken (Section 2), or to be taken where known, prior to and following the meeting (Sections 3 and 4).

Members commented and posed questions in relation to the following matters and Executive Members responded where appropriate:-

(a) Rail Franchise Update

A Member referred to the unprecedented package of improvements which would be delivered by the new franchise deals recently announced by Government. A list of direct benefits to Middlesbrough was detailed in the Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for Regeneration's report. The Member asked how the entertainment and real-time journey information to smartphones and tablets would work. The Deputy Mayor agreed to consult with the relevant Officers and provide further details.

(b) Community Hubs Update

A Member referred to the excellent community work that was happening in Middlesbrough's Community Hubs and mentioned several events that had taken place during the recent festive period. The Member congratulated all those responsible for delivering activities in the Hubs. The Executive Member for Communities and Public Health agreed to pass on the positive comments to staff and added his thanks to all the volunteers who gave up their time for the benefit of their neighbours and communities.

(c) Libraries

A Member highlighted that public computers were now free to all users and free wi-fi would be provided in every library facility across the town by April 2016. In addition, all public computers now also had shortcuts to the Universal Job Match and Preparing for Work websites. The Executive Member replied that he was pleased that Middlesbrough was able to provide these services which had been put in place to address the issue of people on low income or benefits who found it difficult to access the internet.

(d) Selective Landlord Licensing

A Member drew attention to the launch of the North Ormesby Selective Landlord Licensing Scheme which was on schedule for delivery in January 2016. There had been a positive response to the scheme from local residents. The Executive Member commented that introducing this regulation would provide consistency for North Ormesby residents.

(e) In Out of The Cold

A Member referred to the event that took place in Middlesbrough Town Hall Crypt on 15 December 2015 to help those affected by homelessness and hardship. The Executive Member stated that the event had been extremely well attended and it was heart-warming to see people provided with good quality clothing and shoe boxes filled with essential items. Whilst it was probably the best turn out ever, the Executive Member commented that he would have preferred to see an empty room.

(f) Councillors and Social Media

A Member referred to a recent case where libel damages were awarded against Councillors, following comments made on social media. The Member requested some advice and guidance for Councillors on how to use social media safely to avoid any possible legal action for comments made or views expressed. The Executive Member for Finance and Governance suggested that Councillors should check that all information was factually correct before issuing it. Councillors could use the One Stop system, Council reports or check with Officers to ensure the validity of information about the Council.

(g) OFSTED Inspection

Referring to the recent OFSTED inspection of Children's Services in Middlesbrough, a Member asked for the Executive Member's comments on the Prime Minister's recent statement about the transformation of Children's Services and the implications for Middlesbrough. The Executive Member for Children's Social Services confirmed that the formal outcome of the recent OFSTED inspection would not be known until the end of January

or early February 2016. The Government had announced a new mechanism whereby children's social care could be removed from Local Authorities and run by other agencies such as voluntary organisations, charities or groups of experts.

The Government had suggested that initially this policy would apply to Local Authority Departments that were judged by OFSTED to be inadequate and did not make sufficient progress. There had been 74 inspections of Local Authority services in 18 months, of which 19 had been declared inadequate.

The Executive Member commented that the last five years of austerity had created tremendous pressure on families resulting in increased demand on the provision of social care for children and adults. In the current financial year, £0.75 million savings had been made in the children's social care budget and this figure was likely to increase in future years.

The Executive Member stated that the care of children in particular was a collective responsibility of the public sector and not something that should be transferred to voluntary agencies or charities, although it was acknowledged that those agencies did a good job in their areas of expertise. Whilst decisions would be made at a national level, it was the Council's responsibility to ensure that provision was of the highest quality and to co-operate with neighbouring authorities through devolution and Combined Authority arrangements to support each other with resources, expertise and good practice.

(h) Tour De Yorkshire

A Member congratulated officers and Members who had worked hard to bring the Tour De Yorkshire to Middlesbrough. The Member asked what plans the Council had to involve residents and Elected Members in the event? The Executive Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport agreed that it was a massive coup for the town and the Tees Valley and was an excellent opportunity to showcase what the town had to offer. A Members' briefing would be organised to explore what role Members could play and volunteers would be recruited to work on the event itself.

(i) Gym Memberships

A Member referred to the annual gym memberships and the target of 4,400 live members by the end of the financial year in March 2016. November had been the busiest month for sales that Active Middlesbrough had ever seen.

(j) Environment

A Member requested that the current tree policy was reviewed and referred to a recent incident in his Ward where falling branches due to high winds had damaged property. The Executive Member for the Environment confirmed that the Council's Tree Policy would be reviewed.

6 REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Council received and considered a report presented by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Board outlining the work of the Board and Scrutiny Panels.

NOTED

7 MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME

There were no questions for this meeting.

8 NOTICE OF MOTION

There were no Motions for this meeting.

NOTED

9 **NOTICE OF URGENT MOTION****SUSPENSION OF COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO 61 - URGENT MOTIONS**

ORDERED that, Council agreed to suspend Procedure Rule No 61 for the remainder of this meeting and the requirement for 3 clear working days' notice in writing to the Monitoring Officer and the Chair of the Council of the Urgent Motion.

Consideration was given to the following Urgent Motion, moved by Councillor Rooney and seconded by Councillor Young:

'The Council is appalled by the Government's decision to close local HMRC offices, which will see jobs taken away from Middlesbrough and the region. The Council urges them to reconsider, and take into account the potential socio-economic impact of carrying through such a decision when doing so.'

On a vote being taken the motion was unanimously **APPROVED**.

10 **FINAL APPROVAL OF TAXI FEES FOLLOWING CONSULTATION - REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITIES**

A report of the Executive Director Economic Development and Communities was presented in relation to the approval of taxi fees. On 16 September 2015 Council approved a fee structure for taxi licensing in the town, subject to comprehensive consultation being undertaken with the trade. The consultation process had concluded, representations had been taken into account, and an amended fee structure was presented for final approval.

Moved, seconded and **ORDERED** as follows:

1. Council approved the proposed taxi licensing fee structure, set out at Appendix B of the submitted report, which contained refinements resulting from the extended consultation procedure.
2. Council noted the revised method of dealing with the current budgetary surplus as set out at paragraph 17 of the submitted report.

11 **SENIOR MANAGEMENT (LEADERSHIP TEAM) REVIEW - REPORT OF THE MAYOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

A joint report of the Mayor and Chief Executive was presented, the purpose of which was for Council to note the proposed revised senior management structure and to seek approval in principle, to the statutory designations required, subject to the outcome of consultation with staff and Trade Unions.

Moved, seconded and **ORDERED** as follows:

1. The senior management (Leadership Team) structure indicated at Appendix 2 to the submitted report was noted (subject to consultation), in particular the following changes:
 - a) The deletion of the Executive Director, Wellbeing, Care and Learning post and creation of a new post of Strategic Director, Children's Services.
 - b) The merging of the Assistant Director posts (Finance and Investment and Organisation and Governance) to a new single post of Strategic Director, Finance, Governance and Support.
2. The designations to statutory roles as stated below were agreed should the proposed merger at (i) (b) above be implemented following consultation:

- Section 151 - Strategic Director, Finance and Governance (new post) (Deputy - Heads

- of Finance)
- Monitoring Officer - Executive Director, Commercial and Corporate Services (Deputy - Head of Legal Services)
- Returning Officer - Chief Executive (N.B. Chair of Council for National Elections) (Deputy - Head of Democratic Services)

3. Council noted that a revised Pay Policy Statement would be reported to a future Council meeting.

4. Council noted that issues had been raised in relation to the processes being followed and that there would be further discussion to address those issues and ensure proper process had been followed prior to implementation of the Review.

12 **CALCULATION OF COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR 2016/2017 - REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE AND CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

A joint report of the Executive Member for Finance and Governance and the Chief Finance Officer was presented to set the council tax base for the financial year 2016/2017.

Moved, seconded and **ORDERED** as follows that Council:

1. Noted the contents of the submitted report.
2. Agreed the council tax base for 2016/2017 as 32,169.
3. Agreed 1,980 and 648 as the council tax bases for the parishes of Nunthorpe and Stainton and Thornton respectively for 2016/2017.
4. Agreed to notify the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Cleveland Fire Authority and the Parish Councils of the 2016/2017 council tax base.

13 **LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT 2016/2017 - REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE AND CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

A joint report of the Executive Member for Finance and Governance and the Chief Finance Officer was presented to seek approval of the Council Tax Support (CTS) Scheme for 2016/2017.

Moved, seconded and **ORDERED** as follows that Council:

1. Noted the content of the report.
2. Agreed that the national uprated figures laid down through the Prescribed Requirement Regulations for Pensioners were included in the CTS scheme for 2016/2017.
3. Agreed that the amounts used when calculating CTS for working age claimants were uprated in line with the amended Housing Benefit regulations.
4. Agreed that any deductions taken in respect of non dependants living in a property were also uprated in line with the Prescribed Requirement Regulations.
5. Agreed that the family premium was retained in the CTS scheme for 2016/2017 and any requests for backdated CTS could be considered for a period of six months.
6. Approved the Council Tax Support scheme for 2016/2017.