

MEETING OF MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

At the Meeting of Middlesbrough Council, lawfully convened, and held in the Town Hall, Middlesbrough on 20 June 2018.

PRESENT: Councillors S E Bloundele (Chair), R Brady (Vice-Chair), R Arundale, J Blyth, D J Branson, J Brunton Dobson, Mr D Budd, M Carr, D P Coupe, D Davison, S Dean, J Goodchild, A Hellaoui, T Higgins, C Hobson, J Hobson, N Hussain, T Lawton, L Lewis, T Mawston, D McCabe, J McGee, L McGloin, J Mohan, P Purvis, J Rathmell, C M Rooney, D Rooney, J Rostron, M Saunders, M Storey, M Thompson, J A Walker, N J Walker, V Walkington, M Walters, J Young and L Young

OFFICERS: M Allinson, J Bromiley, B Carr, L Henman, D Johnson, E Kunonga, A Pain, T Parkinson, S Reynolds and B Roberts

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were submitted on behalf of Councillors Councillor S Biswas, Councillor E Dryden, Councillor T Harvey, Councillor B A Hubbard, Councillor F McIntyre, Councillor J McTigue, Councillor G Purvis, Councillor J Sharrocks, Councillor Z Uddin.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None Declared

18/29 EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING

The Monitoring Officer had received a request from five Councillors, for an Extraordinary Meeting, to be held for all Councillors to have a full debate on the demolition of the Bus Station. The letter also requested that visitors be able to ask questions.

The letter also advised that the Councillors wished to hand in a petition of over 5,000 names which stated:-

"We call upon Middlesbrough Borough Council NOT to demolish and relocate Middlesbrough Bus Station.

This will cost a vast amount of money that would be better spent elsewhere. The bus station is in the most central position for travellers to the town and has also been the accolade as the safest and best bus station in the north east."

In accordance with paragraph 7 (a) iv) of the Council Procedure Rules, an Extraordinary Council Meeting had been called.

The Chair of the Council reminded members of the public that the Council meeting was a business meeting of the Council, and whilst members of the public were welcome to attend, they were not permitted to speak at the meeting.

The Chair invited Councillor C Hobson to speak on behalf of the signatories in support of the request to call an Extraordinary meeting of the Council.

Councillor Hobson requested that before she presented the case for the Extraordinary meeting, if J Coleman could present the petition to the Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for City Centre Strategy. The Chair advised that only a Councillor could present the petition as outlined in the letter calling the Extraordinary meeting. Councillor Jacob Young handed the petition to the Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for City Centre Strategy.

The Chair invited Councillor C Hobson to speak on behalf of the signatories in support of the request to call an Extraordinary meeting of the Council.

Councillor Hobson advised that the petition contained more than 5000 signatures from people who did not want the bus station to be moved. Councillor Hobson stated that she would like a

few answers.

Firstly, she queried how much it would cost to demolish and rebuild the bus station? The Media Village would have entertainment, a hotel, a cinema, bars, cafes and restaurants and she asked did the town not already have enough bars and restaurants?. Councillor Hobson queried if the Media Village was going to take up a large amount of land, how big the new bus station would be or whether it would be an interchange? Councillor Hobson queried with regard to what would happen to the quiet room which was incorporated into the bus station when the town was designated as a dementia friendly town? Councillor Hobson stated that people did not want the bus station to be demolished, wasting more money, and she asked the Council to think again.

Councillor Arundale stated that the Mayor had promised a full and open consultation but this had not yet happened. He queried whether it was going to happen and what form it would take? He stated that he hoped it would not be a public notice in the Evening Gazette or a notice on the Council's website as many people who were interested in the bus station did not access the Council's website.

Councillor Arundale stated that although it had been said that no decision had been taken, there was an item on the Council's Executive Forward Work Plan for a report to be submitted to the Executive on 2 October to seek endorsement for outline proposals for the development of the Teesside Media Village, so this didn't make sense.

Councillor Branson stated that Members should see what was important. Rather than fixate on the size of the bus station they should focus on the extent of the bus services. The bus station was large and much of the space was not used effectively and other towns did not have bus stations the same size as Middlesbrough. The Council was looking to put forward a development which would bring investment into the town and would generate income which could be used for bus services.

The bus services had been deteriorating for some time. There was no connecting service between Coulby Newham, Marton and Nunthorpe. There was very limited evening service to Coulby Newham and no evening service to Marton and Nunthorpe. The Parkway Centre had to provide its own community bus service to assist people in visiting the Parkway Centre. Councillor Branson stated that deregulation had been a disaster.

Councillor J Young raised a Point of Order. He stated that the meeting had been called to discuss the proposed demolition of the bus station rather than the provision of bus services.

The Chair explained that a bus station's primary function was to be a hub where buses arrived and departed from and he failed to see the logic of the Point of Order. The Chair invited Councillor Branson to continue with his comments.

Councillor Branson explained that it was a question of priorities; whether to continue to spend money on maintaining a large old bus station or whether to provide decent bus services for the people of Middlesbrough. Deregulation had made the bus services unworkable in many parts of Middlesbrough and the Council no longer had any funding available to support bus services. The development of the Tees Media Village would provide income to maintain and develop the bus services.

Councillor Rathmell stated that there had been conflicting statements with regard to whether the bus station was not going to be demolished or if it was to be moved. He queried about how the businesses located in the bus station would be supported. He made reference to pictures that the Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for City Centre Strategy had presented to the Nunthorpe Community Council a number of years ago. He queried whether the Mayor was going to commit core funding for local bus services over and above what was in place at the current time, but significantly more to match what would be lost.

Councillor J Walker stated that she would like support the vision for a new fit for purpose bus terminal which would better serve the needs of the Middlesbrough population.

At present the bus station was in the right place but the building required modernisation to enable businesses, workers, shoppers and visitors to access the facility more easily. A new and improved public transport hub would make Middlesbrough an exciting choice for future investment in the town.

In the next few years Centre Square would be undergoing much needed development and the jobs this would bring would be a boost for the region. An increase in commuters would place more demand on the local transport infrastructure. There was already problems every morning with the traffic in certain locations. Councillor Walker stated that the Council must make the use of trains and buses a palatable choice to increase productivity output. The next step for the town was to achieve City Status, but how could the town aim for this with a bus station that was built 35 years ago, it was not the mark of a positive thinking Council. There had been 40,000 deaths because of air quality and the reliance on cars. Councillor Walker stated that there was a need to encourage more people to use public transport.

Councillor L Young stated that he had lost count of the number of times he had said that we would have a bus station and we were not moving it and that it would be on the same site.

Councillor L Young pointed out that one of the opposition members had stated that we had too many restaurants and some opposition members had also opposed a number of other developments such as Orange Pip market and Centre Square.

A number of members of the public interrupted the meeting at this point and the Chair requested that there be order in the public gallery.

The Media Village was an innovative proposal to redefine what the High Street would look like and would have an increased footfall. He stated that there was no point in having a bus station if you didn't have development surrounding it. Councillor L Young provided a hypothetical vision of the town under an opposition government.

A member of the public interrupted the meeting at this point and the Chair reminded them that it was a business meeting of the Council and members of the public were not allowed to speak. A member of the public continued to interrupt the meeting and the Chair asked her to remain silent.

Councillor L Young stated that there would be meaningful consultation when the plans were brought forward. The bus station would be a vibrant transport hub bringing in thousands of people to work, enjoy the thriving leisure offer and spend their money in town.

Councillor Blyth stated that Middlesbrough had always been about the future. It was a vibrant small city that had ambitions. Councillor Blyth stated that he represented a Ward that has a high proportion of pensioners who regularly used the bus service. The Councillor stated that the town needed a bus station that was more accessible, fit for purpose and was future proof.

Councillor Lawton stated that there was a lot of genuine concern about the future of the bus station. He stated that some of the comments regarding the people signing the petition had been disparaging. He stated that consultation and conversation was required to explain what was happening with the bus station.

Councillor Higgins stated that she had been uplifted earlier on about the good things that were happening in Middlesbrough. She stated that she could understand why the people that had signed the petition were afraid. The people who signed the petition were afraid because they had not been told the truth about the bus station like Captain Cook Birthplace Museum.

At this point of the meeting Councillor Lawton interrupted the proceedings. The Chair requested that the Member refrain from interrupting while another Member was speaking.

Councillor Higgins stated that the people of Middlesbrough were told that the Captain Cook Birthplace Museum was going to be knocked down and the land was to be sold to developers when it was known that the Council had received funding to refurbish the building. Councillor Higgins stated that this was what was happening with the bus station.

At this point Councillor Lawton interrupted the meeting. The Chair advised that he had asked the Member to refrain from interrupting when Members were speaking at least three times. He advised that all Members should be treated with respect when speaking.

Councillor Higgins stated that the bus station would remain where it is but there may be alterations. Councillor Higgins requested that the people of Middlesbrough be told the truth about the future of the bus station.

Councillor Storey stated that it was saddening to see the attitude of some people in the Council Chamber. He stated that Members should be having meetings to talk about transport and the bus station and about the things that Councillor Branson had referenced. The bus station was worthy of discussion and consultation and that would happen in due course but no projects had come forward yet. The bus station would be on the same site but this was not being articulated to the people of Middlesbrough and the Tees Valley. They were being told it was moving to Middlehaven and Newport. Staff members were worried about their livelihoods. There was a pattern of misinformation which worried local people. People who signed the petition were genuinely concerned on a false prospectus.

A member of the public interrupted the meeting again and the Chair warned the lady that she must stop interrupting the meeting. He explained it was a business meeting of the Council and if she continued to interrupt he would ask her to leave the meeting.

Councillor Storey advised that he was stating facts. He had been interviewed on BBC Tees about the bus station and they had referenced sites for new bus station. Councillor Storey advised that this meeting was a missed opportunity, it should be discussing transport and infrastructure. Councillor Storey advised that the Scrutiny Panel that he was responsible for had looked at bus franchising and this was the kind of things that could be discussed.

Councillor J Young stated that he wished to address what Councillor Higgins and Councillor Storey had commented on. In his view, he felt that they had inferred that the people who started this petition had lied. This was not true. They had not had the facts. The rumour started in a Gazette article dated 15 January 2017, where an officer of the Council said that the bus station could end up near the railway station to create a transport hub. Councillor Young stated that people wanted to know what was happening so they could have a coherent discussion.

Councillor C Rooney stated that the truth was out there in respect of the bus station. Councillor Rooney stated that some Councillors were giving a bad account of themselves shouting across the room and bullying. The Councillor queried which Members/Officers the people had consulted about the future of the bus station before starting the petition because he didn't believe that any Member/Officer had been consulted.

Councillor Thompson stated that this was a heated and political debate. The fact that 5000 people expressed concern was not a bad thing. Councillor Young suggested that the bus station had no relevance to bus services.

Councillor J Young raised a Point of Order. He stated that he had not suggested that the bus station had no relevance to bus services. He stated that what David Branson said about bus services was not relevant to why the Extraordinary meeting had been called.

Councillor Thompson stated that Councillor Rathmell had seen a picture of a village bus stop with no restaurants.

Councillor Rathmell raised a Point of Order. He stated that he had a right to respond and he pointed out that the pictures had been presented at Nunthorpe Community Council.

Councillor Thompson stated that he understood that people were afraid and he did not question that fear. He stated that the Council was talking about a potential proposal or development. Councillor Thompson stated that a discussion could not be held if people were shouted down and laughed at. Members should be able to have differences without laughs, jeering and bullying.

The Mayor stated that the item first came to light in the Investment Prospectus where it was stated that TMV was the one item in the Investment Prospectus that was furthest away. There was no plan, there was an idea and possibilities. It was built around cultural, education and leisure facilities all of which were possible although there was no plan yet. As part of this it was stated openly and honestly that it would affect the bus station. Everything that had happened since then was based on rumour and speculation.

The petition called upon Middlesbrough Council not to demolish and relocate the bus station. It had been confirmed on a number of occasions that the bus station would not be relocated. A consultation would take place when there was something to consult on. The TMV report in October would be about broad aims and possibilities it would not produce a plan. The suggestions that a bus station what the bus station should have had been referred to earlier for example we should have a quiet room and a dementia friendly bus station. In terms of costs, the assumption was that it would cost the Council a fortune, but there was a chance that the private sector would pay for it.

The Mayor suggested that if the issue of the bus station did come before Council again that it should be a debate on what the Council wanted in a bus station and bus services.

Councillor Hobson stated that it had been a really good debate and it had been good to hear the different views. The Council did have two accolades for the bus station, i.e. that it was the safest and the best bus station in the North East with thriving businesses. The bus station had 37,000 footfall every day. Councillor Hobson queried why the Council would want to stop that. Councillor Hobson stated that she would like to know the truth about what the Council were going to do with the bus station.