

MEETING OF MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

At the Meeting of Middlesbrough Council, lawfully convened, and held in the Town Hall, Middlesbrough on 15 March 2019.

PRESENT: Councillors Bloundele, (Chair), Arundale, Biswas, Branson, Brunton Dobson, Mr D Budd, (The Mayor), Carr, Coupe, Davison, Dean, Dryden, Harvey, Hellaoui, Higgins, C Hobson, J Hobson, Hubbard, Hussain, Mawston, McCabe, McGee, McGloin, Mohan, Purvis, Rathmell, C M Rooney, D Rooney, Rostron, Saunders, Storey, M Thompson, Uddin, J A Walker, N J Walker, Walkington, Walters, J Young and L Young

OFFICERS: C Breheny, J Bromiley, J Etherington, A Hoy, D Johnson, S Lightwing, C Lunn, T Parkinson, J Shiel

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were submitted on behalf of Councillors Blyth, Brady, Goodchild, Lawton, Lewis, McTigue, J Sharrocks, J Thompson.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no Declarations of Interest at this point in the meeting.

1 **MINUTES - ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING - EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING - 16 JANUARY 2019**

The minutes of both the Council meeting and Extraordinary Council meeting held on 16 January 2019 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

2 **ANNOUNCEMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS**

At the request of the Chair, all present observed one minute's silence to remember those who tragically lost their lives in the New Zealand mosque attack that had taken place earlier on this day.

3 **PETITION**

The Chair, on behalf of the Council, received a petition from Acklam residents in respect of Tollesby Shops. The lead petitioner addressed the Council seeking support to improve the derelict buildings which had been empty for ten years.

The Executive Member for Economic Development and Infrastructure acknowledged receipt of the petition and announced that a meeting would be held with the site's owners next week to discuss a possible joint venture, whereby the Council would take control of the site. It was hoped that a plan would be in place within the next three months.

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

4 **COUNCIL QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

The Chair stated that four questions from members of the public had been submitted, the details of which had been circulated with the agenda.

The Chair invited the member of public who had submitted Question 26/2018 to put his question to the Executive Member for Environment and Commercial Services.

In response to Question 26/2018, the Executive Member advised that the Council's policy of replanting trees on a one for one basis was removed in 2014. However, an area of 11 acres equalling 4.5 hectares had been replanted along the woodland walk and the northern boundary of Newham Grange Farm to replace the 800 trees removed from Site 44 in 2008.

With the agreement of the member of the public putting the question, the Chair **DEFERRED** Question 27/2018 until later in proceedings as the Executive Member for Finance and Governance was not present in the Chamber at this point in the meeting.

The Chair invited the member of public who had submitted Question 28/2018 to put his question to the Executive Member for Culture and Communities.

In response to Question 28/2018, the Executive Member explained that the Stronger Communities Projects were funded by the Home Office in recognition of the pressures faced by the community in Newport Ward. The appalling events that had just taken place in Christchurch, New Zealand, indicated the importance of this work. The Executive Member highlighted some of the important work done by the Streets Ahead Team, the Police Community Support Officer and staff in the Newport Hub.

The Chair invited the member of public who had submitted Question 29/2018 to put her question to the Executive Member for Education and Skills.

The Executive Member apologised to pupils and parents for the stress and anxiety they had suffered since the letter regarding secondary school places was sent out and gave an assurance that this would not happen again. Whilst the Council had the responsibility to place 2000 children in Year 7 secondary school places, the Council did not control the number of places on offer at the seven secondary academies in Middlesbrough. The academies determined which children would be admitted to each school. Currently there was a shortfall of 134 school places. Conversations were ongoing with Headteachers to secure a place for every child who wished to, to attend a school in the Borough and they would be placed before September 2019. The Executive Member also commented that the Council did not receive any funding to build new schools, however, a bid had been submitted by an academy chain for a new 900 place school to provide capacity in Middlesbrough. Since 2015, £7.7 million government funding had been lost from Middlesbrough schools - which equalled £406 per child - and they were now at breaking point.

5 **MAYOR'S STATEMENT AND REPORT**

The Mayor stated that this would be his final scheduled meeting of the Council and he wished to thank all employees, who were doing a whole range of jobs and helping change Middlesbrough. Irrespective of political differences, the Mayor also thanked Councillors for the work they had done over the last four years and in particular for their Ward work, which was not always seen or appreciated, but made a huge difference to Middlesbrough. Thanks were also extended to those Councillors who were involved in Outside Bodies, Committees and Scrutiny. It was highlighted that some successful policies had been developed through Scrutiny. The Mayor also thanked Executive Members for their contributions.

It was noted that the behaviour within the Council Chamber, and also outside, had deteriorated over the last few years. The Mayor stated that political discussion and argument should end when Members left the Chamber and should not become personal, as it had on a number of occasions. In particular, personal attacks on Officers had no place in Middlesbrough Council and the Mayor hoped this would cease. Those who hid behind social media did themselves, and the Council, a disservice. As a consequence of this behaviour, the job of chairing Council meetings had become difficult, and the Mayor extended his thanks to the Chair for the way he had conducted himself in some very difficult circumstances.

The Mayor turned to recent developments and noted that no additional funding or promise of funding had been announced in the Chancellor's Spring Statement and Councils would now have to wait until the Autumn Statement, which left it late for the Council to plan for the future.

The Community Bank that the Mayor had pledged to create four years ago would open shortly in premises in Linthorpe Road. The Bank was already operating online and would help people access relatively cheap loans. The Mayor thanked everyone involved in setting up the Community Bank.

The Mayor stated that he was very proud of what had been achieved in Middlesbrough, and

the programme that had been set out and delivered in the last few years, especially in the face of austerity.

Finally, the Mayor thanked everyone involved in bringing the Radio 1 Big Weekend to Middlesbrough. This was a great coup for the town which would put Middlesbrough on the national stage.

A Member queried arrangements for dealing with employee complaints and the Mayor responded that there were effective policies in place.

NOTED

6 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 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 Council meeting (Sections 3 and 4).

(a) Centre Square Update

A Member asked the Deputy Mayor/Executive Member for City Centre Strategy when an announcement would be made in relation to the occupants of the new office block in Centre Square. The Deputy Mayor/Executive Member stated he would make an announcement as soon as he could. Confidentiality had to be respected and currently there were more applicants for offices than there was space available.

(b) City Centre Strategy

A Member commented on the high street plans for Middlesbrough and the regeneration of the Linthorpe Road area and highlighted how hard officers had worked on these projects and added value to Central Ward. Briefings had been held on a regular basis so that residents and Councillors' concerns could be raised and addressed. The Deputy Mayor/Executive Member agreed that it was vital to work closely with residents and echoed the comments made about officers' input.

(c) Centre Square Update

A Member asked whether a tenant had been secured for the new Centre Square offices and the Deputy Mayor/Executive Member referred him to his previous response.

(d) Children's Care

A Member queried what arrangements were being put in place to replace the Middlesbrough Safeguarding Children's Board which was to be disbanded. The Executive Member confirmed that the Government had made it optional for local authorities to provide alternative arrangements and Middlesbrough Council was working towards a Joint South Tees Children's Safeguarding Board which it was anticipated would be implemented within the next six months.

(e) Newport/Newport Community Hub

A Member commented on the extensive, effective and successful work going on in Newport Ward dealing with anti-social behaviour and commended all joint services who had an input. Providing education and guidance to people dealing with issues on a face-to-face basis was particularly helpful. The Member also referred to celebrations in the town and at the Newport Community Hub for International Women's Day to celebrate women's achievements past and present. The Executive Member for Culture and Communities echoed the comments made and also highlighted the Landlord Licensing Scheme which would supplement other support.

(f) Stronger Communities

A Member queried why more asylum seekers had been assigned to Middlesbrough rather than other areas with more capacity, particularly in light of the lack of secondary school places available. The Executive Member confirmed that he was Chair of the North East Migration Partnership and concurred that pressure from international asylum seekers was only part of the secondary school places issue. The work of dispersal into areas of the UK for people who were seeking asylum, as was their right under international law, was undertaken by the Home Office, and was privatised. The contract in Middlesbrough had been held by G4S and was sub-contracted to Jomast. The Home Office had circumvented the North East Migration Partnership and the Local Authority in the dispersal process. However, a new contractor, Mears, had been successful for the new asylum dispersal contract for the north east and was keen to work with the Partnership and the Council. The Executive Member stated that he welcomed refugees and asylum seekers and wanted to ensure they got good accommodation and all the support they required.

(g) Hearts for the Arts Awards

A Member highlighted Middlesbrough's recent successes in the Hearts for the Arts Awards, being successful in two categories: Best Local Authority Arts Initiative - Community Cohesion, with Erimus, and Best Local Authority Champion - Councillor, for The Mayor. The Member also commented on creative joint work taking place throughout the town with Tees Valley Arts, MIMA, Middlesbrough Football Club and Teesside University, promoting the arts, as well as opportunities for young musicians. The Member was also delighted that the Radio 1 Big Weekend was coming to Middlesbrough. The Executive Member agreed with the sentiments expressed and added that The Mayor had ensured that culture was not only at the heart of Middlesbrough, but also the Tees Valley.

(h) Events

A Member asked whether the Cleveland Show would be held in Stewart's Park this year and how much the Council would contribute to this event. The Executive Member stated that he would get back to the Member with a response as he did not have that information to hand.

(i) Middlesbrough Branding

A Member asked whether a tendering exercise was undertaken for the work on the new Brand in accordance with Middlesbrough Council's new policy. The Executive Member stated that details had previously been provided at the Members' Briefing and a Call-In meeting on that subject. The Executive Member stated that he was happy to reinforce this by forwarding the information to the Member if required.

(j) M Homes/Gresham Neighbourhood Forum

A Member commended the work of the Council in developing M Homes, which was a project to build 100 homes over two years at three sites in Gresham, Beechwood and Hemlington. The Member also praised the success of the Gresham Neighbourhood Forum and the Gresham Neighbourhood Plan. The Executive Member for Economic Development and Infrastructure responded that this was a bold and radical labour policy which would provide different tenures of housing on the three sites. Two of the areas: Gresham and Beechwood, had already been launched and the Council was working with residents and local businesses in Gresham to ensure the development fitted into the wider regeneration of the town centre.

(k) Annual Early Help Report - Plans for the next 12 months

A Member raised his concern in relation to development in the south of the town, with over 500 new homes and 1400 more planned, and the current situation with regard to the lack of secondary school places. The Member sought assurance that there would be sufficient secondary school places in future. The Executive Member for Education and Skills referred the Member to her earlier comments and commented that it was the Government that provided schools, not the Local Authority.

(l) SEND

In relation to children with special educational needs, a Member asked for confirmation that secondary school places would be found. The Executive Member for Education and Skills referred again to her earlier comments and confirmed that all children who wanted a place for September would have one.

(m) Annual Designated Teachers Conference for Looked After Children

Reference was made to the Annual Designated Teachers Conference for Looked After Children held recently which was aimed at designated teachers who supported and championed Middlesbrough looked after children. The Executive Member for Education and Skills agreed that it was a successful event and Middlesbrough was working hard to improve outcomes for all looked after children.

(n) Middlesbrough Bus Station - Red Box Project

A Member referred to progress in Middlesbrough on period poverty and the Red Box Project which had been launched recently at Middlesbrough Bus Station. The Government had announced this week that free sanitary products would be provided at schools and colleges in England which was a huge step for all those who had campaigned. The Executive Member for Environment and Commercial Services commented that she was delighted to work with the Red Box Project and hoped it could be extended to all public buildings and also provide products for primary school children and low paid workers.

(o) Capital Works at Teesside Crematorium

A Member congratulated all involved in the recent capital works to renovate St Hilda's Chapel at the Crematorium. The Executive Member for Environment and Commercial Services agreed that the Chapel was now light and welcoming following the upgrade. The renovations were not yet complete and the next phase would be to look at the landscaping.

(p) 4 Year Performance

Attention was drawn to the 4 year performance in Finance and Governance, including the unqualified external auditor's opinion on value for money, work on financial inclusion and support with universal credit. The Executive Member for Finance and Governance thanked the Member for his comments and agreed that officers had undertaken a lot of work which sometimes went un-noticed.

(q) Social Regeneration

A Member referred to the launch of the eMpower initiative which she had recently attended. Many people from different organisations across the community had attended. The Executive Member for Culture and Communities stated that it had been an excellent event and all those involved had been very positive about Middlesbrough.

Council Question from Member of the Public

The Chair invited the member of public who had submitted Question 27/2018, which was deferred from earlier in the meeting, to now put his question to the Executive Member for Finance and Governance.

The Executive Member for Finance and Governance apologised to the member of the public if he had not always received a reply within the 20 day period. The Council endeavoured to provide the public with accurate information. The simple reason for any delay was the huge increase in the number of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests that had depleted the resources provided by the Government for officers to deal with such requests. In 2015, Transport, Planning, Highways and Road Infrastructure received 67 requests, and in 2018 this had risen to 525. Over the last two years there had been 237 officer hours spent on FOI requests for the Dixons Bank Scheme alone. Public information was available on the Council

website and Officers, Elected Members and the Mayor had attended Parish and Community Councils meetings to talk with residents. Middlesbrough Council as a whole responded to 89% FOI requests within the time limits, compared to the Government Department that deal with FOIs, whose rate was 74%.

7 **REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

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

The Vice Chair commented that all scrutiny panels had done a tremendous amount of important work on behalf of the people of the town over the last four years and he thanked all those involved. Some investigations had changed national policy, particularly in health. The Vice Chair added that scrutiny helped people understand policy and how the Council could work in better ways and encouraged everyone to get involved.

The Chair of the Adult Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel provided information in relation to a recent scrutiny in respect of the LGB&T Community and Elderly Care.

A Member also commented that he had taken a topic to scrutiny and savings of approximately £1 million had been identified.

NOTED

8 **PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2019/2020**

A joint report of the Strategic Director of Finance, Governance and Support and Executive Member for Finance and Governance was presented which requested Council's approval to the Pay Policy Statement 2019/2020. A copy of the Pay Policy Statement 2019/2020 was attached to the submitted report.

In response to a query regarding the exclusion of information relating to apprentices and adult apprentices from the Statement, the Executive Member for Finance and Governance advised that the format of the report was statutory and there was no option for such information to be included.

Moved, seconded and **ORDERED** that the Pay Policy Statement 2019/2020 was approved.

9 **MORTGAGE INTEREST RATE 2019/2020**

A report of the Strategic Director of Finance, Governance and Support was presented to seek Council's approval to set the local average interest rate for the six months commencing 1 April 2019.

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

1. the local average interest rate for the period 1 April 2019-30 September 2019 was set at 3.966%.
2. this rate would be used for all Housing Mortgages for this period.

10 **VISION FOR MIDDLESBROUGH 2025 - UPDATE**

The Mayor presented a report to advise Council of progress made during his term in delivering the Vision for Middlesbrough in 2025 - Fairer, Safer, Stronger.

In March 2017, the Council's Investment Prospectus was launched which contained ambitious schemes to deliver £600 million of inward investment and 5000 jobs. To date, there had been £194 million inward investment and over 1000 new jobs created.

The Mayor went on to highlight several other achievements including the house-building programme, the Cultural Strategy published in 2018, and the Social Regeneration Prospectus. A second Investment Prospectus would be launched during 2019/2020 building on the

momentum of the first and delivering further significant investment and new jobs.

Several Members commented on the Mayor's report highlighting issues including equality and diversity, house-building, the living wage, the community bank, the Cleveland Show, the Mela, secondary school places and council borrowing. The Mayor responded accordingly.

Moved, seconded and **ORDERED** that Council noted:

1. Progress achieved during 2015-2018 in delivering a fairer, safer and stronger Middlesbrough.
2. The plans put in place for future years.

11 **STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2022**

The Mayor presented the Strategic Plan 2019-2022 which he stated was necessary for stability and continuity. The Mayor drew attention to the key highlights in 2018/2019 which included receipt of an unqualified Value for Money opinion from the Council's external auditor, significant progress on the People Strategy including the embedding of corporate values, the launch of the Digital Strategy, the Tees Valley Investment Plan, the re-opening of the refurbished Town Hall and the formation of a Housing Delivery Vehicle.

The Mayor stated that the future of local government, in the sense of funding, remained uncertain. The Strategic Plan provided details of the Council's vision, resources and priorities, and how success would be measured.

A Member drew attention to the statement at Appendix 2 - Directorate Priorities 2019/2020, Children's Services, that 'a Strategic Planning Group would develop a pupil place planning strategy, to ensure sufficient appropriate, high-quality places were available for children and young people now and in the future,' and welcomed this move.

Moved, seconded and **ORDERED** that the Strategic Plan 2019-2022 was approved.

12 **BRITISH EXIT FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION**

The Mayor presented a report to update Members on the UK's Exit from the European Union, (Brexit), which included the implications for the local economy and the Council's strategic objectives, as well as outlining arrangements and the next steps for planning for a 'no deal' Brexit locally.

The Government had committed to creating a UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) to replace the European Structural and Investment Funds which had provided a huge amount of funding to the Tees Valley. However, there had been no update from the Government with regard to the new UKSPF. The Tees Valley Combined Authority had written to the Government to press for a response.

Moved, seconded and **ORDERED** that Council noted the current position in respect of the UK's Exit from the European Union and its implications.

13 **MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions submitted within the specified deadlines for Members' Questions for this meeting.

14 **NOTICE OF MOTION 136 - LOCAL GOVERNMENT ETHICAL STANDARDS**

Consideration was given to Motion No. 136, moved by Councillor Rostron and seconded by Councillor D Rooney of which notice had been given in accordance with Council Procedure Rules No. 53-60 as follows:

'That Middlesbrough Council recognises the recommendations contained within the 'Local Government Ethical Standards: A Review by the Committee on Standards in Public'.

That in the interests of promoting the Code of Conduct 7 Principles Public Life of, Selflessness, Objectivity, Accountability, Honesty, Integrity Openness and Leadership, Middlesbrough Council will ask the Standards Committee to examine the full report and bring forward any recommendations as a result.

In its review of local government ethical standards, published following a year-long review and consultation, the committee has called for council standards boards to be given more power to act on poor conduct from councillors. The recommendations would give local authorities the power to suspend members for the 'most serious or repeated breaches' or violations of the code of conduct - most likely relating to harassment, bullying, and failures to declare financial interests.

We believe that Middlesbrough Council and all its public buildings should be safe places, free from harassment, bullying, or discrimination. In bringing this motion we want to ensure that all Elected Members adhere at all times to these principles and set an example for others to follow.'

On a vote being taken the motion was declared unanimously **CARRIED**.

15 **URGENT MOTIONS**

There were no urgent motions submitted within the specified deadlines for Urgent Motions for this meeting.

16 **COUNCIL DIARY - 2019-2020**

A report of the Strategic Director of Finance, Governance and Support was presented to request approval of the draft programme of Council Committee meeting dates for the next Municipal Year as outlined in the Appendix attached to the report, and to approve the dates and times of Council meetings. The dates were tentative at this stage and could change depending upon the meetings being re-established in the new Municipal Year and to the requirements of individual Chairs appointed at the annual meeting.

ORDERED that the timetable of meetings for the next Municipal Year was approved.