

COUNCIL

A meeting of the Council was held on Wednesday 22 September 2021.

PRESENT: Councillors J Hobson, A Bell (Vice-Chair), R Arundale, D Branson, C Cooke, B Cooper, D Coupe, S Dean, C Dodds, T Furness, L Garvey, TA Grainge, A Hellaoui, T Higgins, A High, S Hill, C Hobson, N Hussain, L Mason, T Mawston, D McCabe, C McIntyre, J McTigue, M Nugent, E Polano, A Preston (The Mayor), J Rostron, R Sands, M Saunders, M Smiles, M Storey, P Storey, J Thompson, Z Uddin, G Wilson and C Wright

OFFICERS: B Carr, S Bonner, C Benjamin, C Breheny, D Johnson, S Lightwing, A Perriman, S Reynolds and K Whitmore

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors D Davison, B Hubbard, D Jones, L Lewis, J Platt, G Purvis, J Rathmell, D Rooney, J Walker, S Walker and A Waters

21/44 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received at this point in the meeting.

21/45 **MINUTES - COUNCIL - 28 JULY 2021**

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 28 July 2021 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

21/46 **ANNOUNCEMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS**

The Chair welcomed Councillor Tony Grainge, who was elected as Ward Councillor for the Ladgate Ward on 16 September 2021, to his first meeting of the Council.

The Chair invited Councillor Grainge to address the meeting. Councillor Grainge thanked those electors that had voted for and supported him and for the kind welcome he had received from those present at the meeting. He stated that he hoped to make a difference for the people of Middlesbrough.

21/47 **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (IF ANY).**

There were no valid questions submitted from members of the public for this meeting.

21/48 **CHANGE TO THE EXECUTIVE SCHEME OF DELEGATION**

The Mayor advised that he had made the following change to his Executive Scheme of Delegation:

Marketing and Communications had been moved from the portfolio of the Mayor to the portfolio of the Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for Culture and Communities.

ORDERED that the change to the Executive Scheme of Delegation be noted.

21/49 **MAYOR'S STATEMENT AND REPORT**

The Mayor stated that the streets were getting busier and it was encouraging that things appeared to be getting back to normal.

Covid

The Covid rate of infections had fallen and Middlesbrough was about 40th in the country in terms of rates of infection. The Mayor stated that people should enjoy the added freedom, but that they should not get too complacent and they should continue to act responsibly. Infection rates compared to hospital admissions were low.

Fly-tipping

The Council was clamping down on fly-tipping. The new squad, as well as clearing the fly-tipping away, were carrying out investigations to find out who the perpetrators were, with the intention of prosecuting them.

Anti-social behaviour

The Council were closing down houses where drug dealing and other anti-social behaviour was taking place. The Mayor urged residents to get in touch and report any instances of anti-social behaviour.

Regeneration

The amount of people shopping in the town was rising and business and investment in the town was improving. The Northern School of Art had recently set up in the centre of the town and developments like this had assisted in regenerating the town, changing other peoples' perception of the town and would assist in creating jobs. More initiatives involving education were due to be announced.

The Mayor stated that he wanted people to grow their own food and to get fit. A new communal growing area had been established in Coulby Newham and Councillors Branson and Smiles had attended the launch. The Mayor stated that initiatives like these were good for mental and physical health and nutrition.

Welcome – Councillor Grainge

The Mayor welcomed Councillor Grainge to his first meeting of full Council and he made reference to the work of the previous Ward Councillor - Councillor Goodchild. He encouraged people to get involved in local politics and commiserated with the candidates that had stood for election but did not get elected.

The Mayor advised the members of the public that he and the rest of the Councillors were there to help with any issues that they might have.

Hemlington

The Mayor made reference to issues in Hemlington, including anti-social behavior and crime and the practice of some people setting fires so that the Fire Brigade would be called, then throwing bricks at the officers of the Fire Brigade. He encouraged residents to report those responsible. More cameras were getting installed in the area to enable the perpetrators to be identified, so that appropriate action could be taken.

Councillor M Storey reiterated the welcome to Councillor Grainge and advised that the Council was a great place to work and he hoped that the new councillor would enjoy it. Councillor Storey stated that he was proud of the diversity in the town and this was reflected in the make-up of the Labour Group councillors.

Councillor Storey stated that he was pleased that more action was being taken in respect of fly-tipping and he queried with regard to the average waiting times to get bulky items removed. He queried with regard to how many additional staff had been employed and how many more might be hired.

Councillor Storey queried with regard to the future plans for the House of Fraser store and how long it would be for the plans to come to fruition. Councillor Storey also made reference to the vacant Debenhams and Burtons stores and future use for those buildings.

Councillor Storey highlighted that in addition to Hemlington, other areas outside of the town centre were also suffering from anti-social behaviour and crime, and care needed to be taken to ensure resources to deal with these issues, were not taken away from other areas outside the town centre.

The Mayor stated that there was no excuse for fly-tipping. The Council offered a free

collection service, but if residents wanted their bulky waste collecting earlier, they would be charged for the expedited service. Fly-tipping was a challenge because if the Council removed the fly-tipped items, people were more likely to fly-tip again. The new squad carried out investigations in respect of any instances of fly-tipping but it was a time-consuming exercise. The staff were working very hard to deal with the issue of fly-tipping.

The Mayor advised that the House of Fraser store was bought by the Council for £1m around 16 months ago. There was a concern that Binns would leave the building and the property would remain empty.

The Mayor referred to The Crown and the fact that it had been left vacant for some time. The Council had been trying to engage with the owner for some time to try and ascertain what was happening with the building. The Council had also liaised with the owners of the vacant Debenhams store with regard to future use of the store, but the owners had not provided any update with regard to the future of the vacant building. The Burtons store had been purchased by a private investor, but to date, the Council had not received any information with regard to the future use of the store. The Council was also intending to get in touch with the owners of the Astoria building with regard to overgrown trees which were affecting the guttering of the building.

Councillor Cooke referred to the 'Give a Coat a Home' initiative. The Town Hall carriageway would be open from 10am – 2.00pm on Saturday, 25 September 2021, to enable members of the public to obtain a winter coat, free of charge.

In respect of house closures, Councillor Cooke stated that he felt very strongly about this issue and he tried to attend all of the house closures. The Councillor stated that the issue was that only half of the Newport Ward was covered by the Selective Landlord Licensing scheme. If the scheme was extended to the rest of the ward, some of the issues leading to house closures, might be alleviated.

Councillor McTigue stated that there appeared to be some confusion between fly-tipping and unwanted household goods. Councillor McTigue advised that she had never waited longer than a week for fly-tipping to be removed, but the timescale for removal of bulky household items was usually twelve weeks.

Councillor McTigue stated that she wanted to add to what Councillor Storey had mentioned regarding diversity in the town. Councillor McTigue advised that when she had requested clothing and toys for the Afghan people fleeing the Taliban, the people of Middlesbrough had been very generous. A family in Harrogate had also donated items after reading about the initiative in the press.

Councillor Bell stated that he agreed with the Mayor's comments about Hemlington. He stated that he had seen fires in Hemlington, but he urged residents to report any instances of anti-social behaviour, in order for something to be done about the issue.

Councillor Coupe stated that he wanted to thank the Mayor regarding the plans to renovate the old Town Hall. Councillor Coupe stated that it was right to chase up owners of derelict buildings to encourage them to repair or occupy the buildings.

Councillor Coupe stated that fly-tipping was an issue in every ward and he was pleased that fly-tippers were being targeted.

Councillor Furness referred to Universal Credit cut and the rise in energy prices and the rise in inflation and he requested the Mayor to do what he could to assist those affected by these issues.

The Mayor stated that the effect on the poorest people would be devastating. He stated that he hoped the government would look at the cut in Universal Credit again. He stated that the biggest losers would be the poorest and the government needed to be reminded of that.

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 meeting (Sections 3 and 4).

Questions on the Mayor's Executive Member report

Councillor Higgins in relation to Commissioner

Councillor Higgins stated that she was concerned with regard to the political situation with regard to Children's Services. The Chair and the Vice Chair of the Children's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel had resigned and the Mayor was currently the Lead Member for Children's Services. Councillor Higgins stated that she was concerned that the political turmoil might lead to the Council being advised that it could no longer run Children's Services, which would be devastating following the improvements that had been made to the service.

The Mayor advised that there had been a great improvement in Children's Services. The Council had received a positive report from the Commissioner and he had recommended to the Government that the Council was ready to run and manage Children's Services. The formal announcement was due to be made on 15 September, but following changes in the Government positions, the announcement had been delayed.

In response to the resignations of the Chair and Vice Chair of the scrutiny panel, the Mayor advised that he did not have any influence on scrutiny positions within the Council.

Councillor Uddin queried whether the Mayor could provide an update on the current position in respect of vaccinations and what the procedure was for obtaining a booster.

The Mayor advised that he did not have the latest figures to hand in respect of vaccinations, but he advised that he would forward them and details of the procedure for obtaining boosters, in due course.

Councillor Thompson commented, that as an ambassador of 'You've Got This', she was pleased to see that it was included in the Executive Member reports and that the 'Beat the Box' initiative that was due to be launched on 26 September 2021 was being promoted.

Councillor Smiles stated that she was looking forward to 'Beat the Box'. Little boxes would be placed across the whole town and all of the schools were involved. Young people would be set a town-wide exercise to locate the boxes either by cycling or walking, to improve fitness. The children would then tag the boxes with little key chains. It was a positive initiative for the whole town. Up to 13% of residents were involved, but Councillor Smiles urged councillors to encourage their residents to become involved.

The Mayor stated that he wished to pay tribute to Hugh and Emma Alberti from the Green Party, who had alerted the Mayor to the initiative over a year ago. The Director of Public Health had sourced funding to bring it to Middlesbrough. He stated that it would be lots of fun and a good way to get fit.

Questions on the Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for Culture and Communities report

Councillor Mawston in relation to Stewart Park

Councillor Mawston stated that he wished to pay tribute to John Fearn, one of the stewards of the Park Run who had recently died aged 88. Mr Fearn had been a steward of the Park Run since its inception. He was a former Middlesbrough Council officer. He was a friend of Stewart Park and Marton library and a volunteer at Marton Community Centre. He had also carried out work in relation to the environment. Councillor Mawston stated that Mr Fearn had carried on cycling throughout his life and he was known as the man on the bike and he felt it was important to pay tribute to him.

Councillor Smiles echoed Councillor Mawston's sentiments and passed on her condolences, and advised that she was sure that all the other councillors would join her in acknowledging Mr Fearn's passing.

Councillor Branson in relation to Newham Grange Farm.

Councillor Branson stated that he welcomed the introduction of community allotments and he thanked Councillor Smiles, the area care team and members of the Erimus Rotary Club. He stated that he was surprised at the high level of demand for allotments and there needed to be an increase in allotments across the town.

Councillor Smiles advised that it had been lovely to visit Newham Grange Farm. It was the Jewel in the Crown for Middlesbrough. People who were interested in having an allotment would be placed on a waiting list until one became available. Allotments had become more popular during the lockdown period as they were good for peoples' mental and physical health. It was hoped that more allotments could be created across the town.

Questions on the Executive Member for Environment, Finance and Governance report

Councillor Cooke in relation to Recycling

Councillor Cooke stated that there had been 2 new recycling initiatives that had been successful. The area care team were now operating with split bins, with a section for recycled waste and a section for general waste, which could result in less items being sent to land fill. There had also been a trial to deliver recycling bags to 600 homes in Newport and it was hoped that this could be rolled out in other wards that used the bags, to encourage residents to recycle.

Councillor Cooper stated that the new split bins were very good and easy to push. Residents used to visit Streets Ahead to collect the bags but it was planned to post the bags through the letterboxes of residents in the future.

Councillor Thompson in relation to Hedges and Shrubs.

Councillor Thompson stated that she was in favour of the idea of supporting micro forests, however some trees needed pruning or moving as they were located in the wrong place.

Councillor Cooper advised that the Council had an agreed strategy for dealing with dead/deceased/damaged trees. He stated that in terms of trees, the Council needed to do the right thing, at the right place at the right time.

Councillor Thompson queried whether when a councillor identified a tree where the shoots were expanding all over, whether the trees would be pruned.

Councillor Cooper advised that officers would inspect any trees where they had been notified that they were in need of pruning, and get the job done.

Councillor Hellaoui in relation to APSE Service Awards 2021.

Councillor Hellaoui stated that she wished to pay tribute to the Council's area care team. The APSE awards recognised the best in public service and shared good practice. The Council's area care team had been awarded 1st place in the Best Service Team Award, out of a total of 320 submissions and Councillor Hellaoui stated that she wanted to offer her congratulations to the team on this great achievement.

Councillor Cooper stated that he was sure that the staff would appreciate the fact that their efforts had been recognised.

Question on the Executive Member for Regeneration report

Councillor Furness in relation to Towns Fund – Ward Initiatives

Councillor Furness stated that the funding that had been allocated could have a huge impact. He stated that he would like to see the funding rolled out continually, rather than a 'one-off' event.

Councillor Polano advised that there was a process for Councillors to feed ideas in with regard to the use of the funding in their Ward.

21/51 **REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Board submitted a report, the purpose of which was to provide an update on the current position regarding progress made by the Overview and Scrutiny Board and each of the individual Scrutiny Panels.

ORDERED that the report be noted.

21/52 **URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items submitted within the specified deadlines for this meeting.

21/53 **MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME**

The Chair announced that there were four questions from Members of the Council. The details of the specific questions were included at Agenda Item 11.

Question 4/21 - Councillor M Storey to the Mayor with regard to when the recently adjourned meeting to discuss the Stainsby Masterplan would be reconvened and whether a decision would be taken that both addressed the concerns of residents and safeguarded the Council from any legal action from developers?

The Mayor advised that this was an issue where the Council would need to look closely at the evidence, and they would not rush into making a decision on it. There was more work to be done before the Council could make a decision on this issue, and they were looking now at how they would do that. The Mayor advised that he would not put any definitive timescales on when the decision would be taken, at this stage.

Question 5/21 - Councillor Cooke to the Mayor with regard to Middlesbrough Council offering a pest control service.

The Mayor stated that it was the case that other Councils offered a subsidised pest control service to private properties. He advised that whilst he could not promise anything at this point, he would request that the provision of a pest control service be explored as part of the Council's budget setting process.

Question 6/21 – Councillor Furness to the Executive Member for Regeneration regarding Selective Landlord Licensing with regard to how many houses were under license throughout Middlesbrough? In the likes of Gresham ward where only half were under licence, whether there was a difference in housing from the licensed areas to the unlicensed areas?

The Executive Member for Regeneration advised that the Newport Selective Landlord Licensing Scheme had been in place since June 2019. To date 845 licences had been issued with 107 still outstanding. It was too early to conduct a formal evaluation of the scheme because of the interruptions to some of the elements caused by COVID - there had been a delay to housing inspections but actions in response to anti-social behaviour, such as housing Closure Orders, had been able to be progressed.

Evaluation would be re-programmed and would take place in due course. A full evaluation was carried out in respect of the first North Ormesby Selective Landlord Licensing Scheme (2016-2021) and this demonstrated positive outcomes in terms of house prices; reduction in tenant turnover; improvements in the condition of properties and a reduction in some aspects of anti-social behaviour.

The second North Ormesby Scheme was introduced in June 2021 to continue to progress this work and it was estimated that 878 properties would be licensed.

Councillor Furness stated that he would like to see the difference in the two areas. He stated that he had experienced issues in the past with bad landlords and tenants and he hoped that the scheme would be rolled out across the whole of Newport Ward and eventually the rest of the town, although he acknowledged that this would need government approval.

Councillor Polano advised that the Council was endeavouring to roll out the Selective

Landlord Licensing Scheme across the whole of the Newport Ward.

Question 7/21 - Councillor P Storey to the Mayor regarding whether he could rule out the introduction of fortnightly bin collections in the financial year 2022/23?

The Mayor advised that there were no plans to introduce weekly collections in 2022/23.

21/54 **NOTICE OF MOTIONS**

There were no Notice of Motions submitted within the specified deadlines for this meeting.

21/55 **NOTICE OF URGENT MOTIONS (IF ANY)**

There were no Notice of Urgent Motions submitted within the specified deadlines for this meeting.

21/56 **COUNCIL COMMITTEES AND OUTSIDE BODY VACANCIES**

Council received a report which sought Members' approval to nominations for appointment, arising from vacancies deferred at the Annual Meeting of Council and resignations from Committees.

The report included a list of current vacancies on various committees and Outside Bodies and nominations were put forward at the meeting by individual members.

ORDERED that the following vacancies allocated in accordance with the wishes of the political groups and other councillors be approved by Council:

Live Well South Tees Board

Councillor Hellaoui appointed

Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel

Councillor Mawston appointed

Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel

Councillor Hellaoui appointed

Chair of Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel:

Councillor Davison appointed

Vice-Chair of Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel:

Councillor Mawston appointed

Corporate Parenting Board

No nominations – 1 Vacancy

Chair of Corporate Parenting Board

Councillor C Hobson appointed

Corporate Health and Safety Steering Group

No nominations - 1 Vacancy – Open to all Councillors

Outside Bodies

(ANEC) Resources Task and Finish Group

No nominations received – 1 Vacancy – Open to all Councillors

North East Regional Employers' Organisation (NEREO)

No nominations received – 1 Vacancy – Open to all Councillors

Tees Valley Arts Board

Councillor Mieka Smiles appointed

