

COUNCIL

A meeting of the Council was held on Wednesday 30 March 2022.

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

OFFICERS: C Benjamin, S Bonner, C Breheny, B Carr, D Johnson, A Johnstone, A Pain, T Parkinson, S Reynolds, K Whitmore and I Wright

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors L Garvey, A High, S Hill, D Jones, L Lewis, G Purvis, J Rostron, J Thompson, J Walker and C Wright

21/108 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

21/109 **MINUTES - ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING - 26 JANUARY 2022 AND BUDGET COUNCIL MEETING - 23 FEBRUARY 2022**

The minutes of the Council meetings held on 26 January and 23 February 2022 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

21/110 **ANNOUNCEMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS**

The Chair read out a prepared statement in relation to the submission of Executive Member reports.

The Chair advised that the Executive reports were a useful source to identify what activities were taking place in each service area. They also provided information with regard to the work of Executive members and they assisted in answering queries from residents' about projects or works that were being undertaken within individual members' wards.

21/111 **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (IF ANY).**

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

21/112 **MAYOR'S STATEMENT AND REPORT**

The Mayor advised that he was feeling positive following meetings with potential investors in the town.

The Mayor announced that the Rugby League World Cup was due to take place at the Riverside Stadium. He urged the public to ensure that the stadium was full. The Mayor stated that the fact that the match was being held at the Riverside could inspire children to take part in sports.

Two new office blocks were currently being constructed, one at the former Melrose House building and Boho X. The Mayor advised that both blocks had already secured tenants and this would bring jobs to the town. The Heads of Terms had been signed some time ago for the Boho X building and the lease was due to be signed in the near future.

The Mayor announced, that following years of dereliction in the Gresham area, the Thirteen Group were back on site, building homes and volunteers were cleaning the alleyways in the area.

New housing was also currently being built opposite the Captain Cook public house, and the

first sixty homes were due to be completed in the next two months.

The Mayor referred to the leisure facility due to open in Captain Cook Square, which included a bowling and Go-Kart facility, Indoor golf and the facility to host live music and comedy.

The Mayor stated that the original plan for Centre Square Building 1 which had cost £20m to erect, was for officers of the Council to occupy the building. The building was now fully occupied by a tenant. The top floor of Building 2 was currently let to XPS and the second floor was let to GP Bank. The ground floor was currently occupied, mainly by a chamber of barristers.

The Mayor advised that in terms of the production of Executive reports, previously officers had spent a long time producing reports for politicians to read at Council. He advised that he was reviewing how the Executive would connect with members and the public.

A new on-line facility would be introduced which would allow members and the public to submit a question to an Executive Member and the details of the question and the response would be published online within 10 working days.

The Mayor stated that he planned to invite Executive Members to speak at Council to advise Members of any activity that was occurring in respect of their individual portfolios. The Mayor advised that the Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for Children's Services would provide members at this meeting with an overview of the current situation in respect of Children's Services and the Executive Member for Neighbourhood Safety would discuss issues regarding crime and neighbourhood safety.

The Chair announced that given that the Mayor had raised the issue of Executive Member reports, it would be appropriate for Councillor Uddin to pose his question with regard to the production of Executive Member reports.

Councillor Uddin put his question to the Mayor regarding Executive Member reports.

The Mayor stated that any person elected by the people of Middlesbrough should be open and accessible. He stated that Executive Member reports were important but they needed to come from the heart of the Executive Member, rather than from officers. He stated that the format of the reports had been discussed with officers and the Executive.

Councillor C Hobson commented that she was concerned about the lack of Executive Member reports. Members and the public needed to know what the Executive Members were working on. The Executive Member reports should have continued to be submitted until an alternative format had been agreed.

The Mayor stated that the production of Executive Member reports did not mean that the public were getting value for money. The Executive aimed to be open and transparent. Any Member wishing to ask a question of an Executive Member could email them direct.

Councillor McTigue stated that the Executive Member reports usually detailed events that had already taken place. When reports were written by officers, the Executive Members sometimes struggled to answer questions on the reports. Councillor McTigue stated that she would like to see a change in the format and would like to see all Executive Member reports written by the Executive Members.

Councillor Rathmell stated that having Executive Members stand up and speak at the Council meeting in relation to activity relating to their portfolios could be trialed and if it didn't work, the process could be reviewed.

Councillor M Storey cited a number of examples of where money had been wasted as a result of amended projects and issues with the purchase of Covid tests that the Council had been unable to utilise. He stated that accountability was important. He stated that previous Executive Member reports had been excellent and well written with the assistance of officers. Councillor Storey stated that any changes with regard to the submission of Executive Member reports would need to be discussed at Constitution and Members' Development Committee, prior to agreement by Council. If an Executive Member report had been circulated prior to the meeting, Members would be able to ask questions on the content.

Councillor Rathmell stated that the two Executive Members should be allowed to provide any highlights in relation to their portfolios.

In response to the comment from Councillor M Storey, the Mayor explained the rationale behind changes to the Boho X project.

Councillor M Storey queried if the Mayor could confirm that the plans had changed as a result of Covid.

The Mayor stated that the change in any plans could be influenced by a number of factors, but the biggest factors in relation to the changes in the Boho X project were Covid and the potential to save £10m.

Councillor Cooke advised that Executive Member reports were important as they included details of work that was being carried out in the community. He cited a number of examples of work that was currently being carried out within the Newport Ward.

The Mayor commented that Councillor Cooke was an excellent Councillor and he commended those involved in the Letitia House scheme for their work with assisting in getting vulnerable people off the streets.

Councillor Rooney stated that the Mayor had made reference to the developments in the town centre and she pointed out that many of the projects had been initiated as a result of the Investment Prospectus, which had been produced by the previous Elected Mayor.

Councillor Rooney stated that, in terms of the prospect of the two Executive Members speaking at this Council meeting, there was no agenda item relating to Executive Member reports, so they should not be allowed to speak. The requirement for Executive Members to report to Council on activities on their portfolio was included at item 4 in the Executive Scheme of Delegation.

Councillor Rooney stated that as a former Executive Member, she had written all of her own reports to Council, with the assistance of an officer.

Councillor Mawston stated that it was good to hear that the Rugby League World Cup was taking place at the Riverside Stadium. The Captain Cook Birthplace Trust had been involved in many activities with the team.

In terms of Executive Member reports, Councillor Mawston stated that the reports did need an overhaul. He stated that he had emailed an Executive Member to ask them a question but he had not received a response.

The Mayor stated that he wasn't suggesting that the new system, where Members could submit questions, would replace Executive Member reports.

Councillor Branson stated that Executive Member reports could be shorter and more concise, but it was important that Members received them in advance of the meeting and that they were kept informed of what was happening in respect of the different portfolios.

Councillor Higgins stated that it was important to be open and transparent. Members often found out what was happening in the local press and it was important for Executive Member reports to be received in advance of the meeting.

The Chair stated that any changes to the Constitution needed to be agreed by full Council.

21/113

REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Board submitted a report that provided an update on the current position regarding progress made by the Overview and Scrutiny Board and each of the individual Scrutiny Panels.

The Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Board stated that all Executive Members were invited to the Board to provide a comprehensive overview of the Executive Member's aims and

aspirations, progress made to date and to highlight any emerging issues relating to their portfolios, but it was still important for Council to receive Executive Member reports.

ORDERED that the report be noted.

21/114 **URGENT ITEMS**

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

21/115 **MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME**

The Chair announced that there were now only three questions from Members of the Council, as Question 12/2021 had been dealt with under the Mayor's report agenda item. The details of the specific questions were included at Agenda Item 11.

In response to Question 9/2021 - Councillor Branson to the Mayor in relation to bus services, the Mayor stated the following:

- Middlesbrough Council recently approved the decision to formally sign up to the region's imminent Bus Service Improvement Plan.
- This would cover a number of key themes such as improvements to infrastructure, punctuality and ticketing offers for young people.
- It was envisaged that along with this plan, and the Council's own funding there would be local schemes to focus on issues that would improve bus journeys and make them a more viable alternative for people.
- The Council's strategies had sustainable modes of transport at their heart and the Council would keep pursuing those.

In response to Question 10/2021 - Councillor Furness to Councillor Polano with regard to the ongoing trend and decline in footfall and trade given the current economic climate of high Inflation, Councillor Polano stated the following:

The Council was trying to change the offer in the town centre and move away from being so reliant on retail. As things were becoming more expensive, the existing retailers would find life harder and the Council would do what they could to help them. The Council had expert commercial asset managers in place (Praxis) for both centres, and they were experienced at managing through difficult times. The Council's financial projections for the centres had not been built on 'best case scenarios' so they did have some ability to withstand any shocks. The Council would however hope to retain as much of the current offer as they could.

In response to Question 11/2021 - Councillor Furness to Councillor Polano with regard to landlord licensing, Councillor Polano stated the following:

There were certain legal criteria which had to be met to designate an area for selective licensing. They included a high proportion of property in the private rented sector, low housing demand, significant and persistent problems caused by anti-social behaviour and poor property conditions. In relation to future roll out the Council was currently preparing a proposal document for the Newport 2 area which would be submitted to Executive for approval prior to a consultation exercise being carried out? After this scheme was implemented the Council was planning to review areas for potential future schemes based on the legal criteria.

In North Ormesby there was currently 894 licensable properties. To date, 606 properties had applied for their licence.

In Newport 1, there was 1166 licensable properties. To date, 1158 properties had applied for their licence.

Work was still ongoing in both areas to licence the properties. Legal action could be taken if the property owner did not apply for a licence, although this had only been necessary in a small number of cases.

21/116 **NOTICE OF MOTIONS**

Consideration was given to Motion No. 152, moved by Councillor M Storey and seconded by

Councillor Dean of which notice had been given in accordance with Council Procedure Rules No. 53-60 as follows:

“Middlesbrough Council recognises and sends its congratulations to Her Majesty the Queen on reaching 70 years on the throne.

The Platinum Jubilee is an opportunity for people to pay tribute and thank the Queen for leading Britain. In her 70 years as monarch she has been a calming and reassuring presence to the people of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth. It is also an opportunity for people to reflect on the changes that have occurred during her long reign.

This Council therefore takes this opportunity to recognise her longevity and hard work on behalf of the country in her time as sovereign”.

The Chair invited Members to speak on the motion.

Councillor Furness commented on the grants available towards community events for the Queen's Jubilee celebration taking place over the long Bank Holiday weekend (Thursday 2 June to Sunday 5 June 2022).

Councillor Arundale stated that he was one of many who had sworn allegiance to the Queen. He stated that the Queen was a wonderful asset to the country and he would be supporting the proposed motion.

Councillor Smiles stated that the Queen had given extraordinary service to the country. The grants scheme was a wonderful way in which to help residents and communities to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee. Councillor Smiles advised that she would be supporting the motion.

Councillor Dean stated that the Queen had done a wonderful job over the last 70 years. Lots of communities and residents had secured funding through the Council's scheme to enable them to hold parties to celebrate the event.

Councillor M Storey advised that the Queen had visited the area a number of times. The first visit was in 1956. In 1977, the Queen visited Tees Dock as part of her Silver Jubilee celebrations. In 1993, the Queen visited Pallister Park and in 2012, the Queen had visited the Tees Barrage. Councillor Storey stated that the grants scheme was a fantastic way of enabling residents to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee.

The Chair invited the Monitoring Officer to conduct a vote on the motion.

The motion was put to the vote.

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

21/117 **NOTICE OF URGENT MOTIONS (IF ANY)**

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

21/118 **COUNCIL DIARY REPORT**

The Executive Member for Environment, Finance and Governance and the Director of Legal and Governance Services submitted a report, the purpose of which was to agree the timetable of meetings for the Municipal Year 2022/2023.

The Director of Legal and Governance Services advised that the dates contained within the timetable were tentative, and could be subject to change.

Following a vote, it was:

ORDERED as follows:

- (i) That the timetable of meetings for the Municipal Year 2022/2023, as detailed in the

Appendix to the report, be approved.

- (ii) That, with the exception of the following, the dates for ordinary meetings of the Council be designated as meetings at which questions will be taken from members of the public:

- Budget/Council Tax Setting Meetings – 27 February and 8 March 2023
- Wednesday 24 May 2023 (Annual Meeting).

21/119 **VACANCIES ON COMMITTEES REPORT**

Council received a report which sought nominations for appointment, following resignations from Committees and the freeing up of places on scrutiny panels, vacated as a result of members being appointed to the Executive.

The report included a list of current vacancies on various committees 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, be approved by Council:

Adult Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel

1 Vacancy – Open to all Councillors - No nominations - Deferred

Children and Young Peoples' Learning Scrutiny Panel

1 Vacancy – Councillor C Hobson appointed

Durham Darlington Teesside Hambleton Richmondshire and Whitby (DDTHRW) STP Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1 Vacancy – Councillor J Hobson appointed

Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel

1 Vacancy – Councillor J Hobson appointed

Health Scrutiny Panel

1 Vacancy – Councillor M Saunders appointed

Chair of Health Scrutiny Panel

1 Vacancy – Councillor D Davison appointed

South Tees Health Scrutiny Committee

1 Vacancy – Councillor Dodds appointed

Tees Valley Health Scrutiny Committee

1 Vacancy – Open to all Councillors - No nominations - Deferred

Overview and Scrutiny Board

1 Vacancy - Councillor Hubbard appointed

Corporate Parenting Board

1 Vacancy - Councillor Dodds appointed

Vice-Chair of Corporate Parenting Board (must be a member of Corporate Parenting Board)

1 Vacancy – Councillor Davison appointed

Planning and Development Committee

1 Vacancy – Councillor Davison appointed