

COUNCIL

A meeting of the Council was held on Wednesday 20 October 2021.

PRESENT: Councillors J Hobson, A Bell (Vice-Chair), R Arundale, C Cooke, B Cooper, D Coupe, D Davison, C Dodds, T Furness, TA Grainge, A Hellaoui, C Hobson, B Hubbard, L Lewis, L Mason, T Mawston, D McCabe, C McIntyre, M Nugent, E Polano, A Preston (The Mayor), G Purvis, D Rooney, J Rostron, M Smiles, P Storey, J Thompson, Z Uddin, S Walker and G Wilson

OFFICERS: C Benjamin, S Bonner, C Breheny, B Carr, A Hoy, D Johnson, S Reynolds, K Whitmore, A Wilson and I Wright

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors D Branson, S Dean, L Garvey, T Higgins, A High, S Hill, N Hussain, D Jones, J McTigue, J Platt, J Rathmell, R Sands, M Saunders, M Storey, J Walker, A Waters and C Wright

21/57 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

21/58 **MINUTES - COUNCIL - 22 SEPTEMBER 2021**

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 22 September 2021 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

21/59 **ANNOUNCEMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS**

The Chair welcomed members back into the Council Chamber.

The Chair requested that members join him in a minutes silence to remember Sir David Amess MP who was tragically murdered on 15 October 2021, whilst carrying out his constituency surgery.

All those present stood in silence to remember Sir David Amess MP.

21/60 **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (IF ANY).**

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

21/61 **MAYOR'S STATEMENT AND REPORT**

The Mayor stated that he wished to speak about the following issues:

Covid

The Mayor stated that there had been an increase in the rate of Covid infections, and he reminded everyone that Covid was lethal to some people. He urged people not to panic, but to be sensible and to continue to wear face masks. Middlesbrough was currently about 80th position in the table of rates of Covid cases, but as the town suffered from high unemployment and had a dense population; compared to other towns with the same issues, Middlesbrough had a lower rate of infections. The Mayor stated that this was largely down to work of the Council's Public Health Team. He encouraged people to take up the offer of having a vaccination or booster.

Hemlington Ward

The Mayor referred to a small group of people in the Hemlington area that were carrying out anti-social behaviour and intimidating residents. Some residents that lived in the Hemlington area were afraid to report any instances of anti-social behaviour to the police or the council. The groups carrying out the anti-social behaviour were aged between 12 – 16 years of age

and they were committing serious crimes. He stated that he was pleased to see that some people had been arrested and that action would be taken against the perpetrators. The same groups had been throwing bottles at the police and the fire brigade.

The Mayor urged people living in the Hemlington Ward to report any instances of anti-social behaviour to the police or crime stoppers. He stated that the Council also needed to put pressure on those involved in the sentencing process.

Wardens had been under attack along with the police and the fire brigade. The Wardens had been involved in numerous different tasks whilst performing their role as a Warden, including saving 13 lives, reuniting dementia sufferers and lost children or pets with their families and assisting the homeless by signposting them to the correct services in order for them to be re-housed. The Mayor also referred to the work of the Fly-Tipping Enforcement Team.

Standards Complaints

The Mayor referred to the amount of money and time being spent on investigating complaints against councillors. He urged councilors to think whether a complaint was necessary, before submitting a Standards complaint against another councillor.

The Mayor stated that if any person felt lonely, isolated or intimidated, the Council was available to help improve their life. He urged residents to get in touch with the Council and they would do what they could to assist.

Councillor Mawston referred to the good response to attending for vaccinations at the mobile vaccination centre in Newport. He stated that only a few members were involved in submitting complaints against other councillors.

The Mayor stated that there was currently a culture in the Council of councillors using the Standards complaints process to bully other councilors. This was causing a strain on the department responsible for dealing with the complaints in terms of the time being taken up to investigate the complaints and there was also a financial cost involved.

Councillor Rooney stated that everyone needed to be more vigilant in respect of dealing with Covid and she stated that she had been hoping for a stronger message to be conveyed to the public with regard to helping to prevent the spread of Covid.

Councillor Rooney stated that it was pleasing to see the queues of people waiting to receive their vaccinations at the Newport hub. The Riverside site was sometimes difficult for residents to get to, so it was good to see that residents had access to other more accessible sites to receive their vaccination.

In terms of the anti-social behaviour in the Hemlington Ward, Councillor Rooney urged residents to report any instances to the appropriate authorities.

In terms of the amount of Standards complaints, Councillor Rooney stated that councilors had a duty to uphold the highest standards of behaviour. If there had been an increase in the number of complaints being submitted, then this needed to be looked into to see what the reason was for the increase in the receipt of complaints.

**At this point of the meeting, member were informed that there had been a break down in the filming of the meeting. As, according to the Access to Information Rules, the meeting was open to the public to attend, the meeting continued.

Councillor Cooke referred to the excellent attendance at the Newport vaccination centre.

In terms of the issues of anti-social behaviour being experienced in the Hemlington area, Councillor Cooke stated that locality working should be rolled out in that and other Wards. It had made a huge difference to anti-social behaviour in the Newport Ward.

In relation to the increase in the number of Standards complaints, Councillor Cooke stated that having seen some emails concerning councillors and their families, he could understand why some of the complaints had been submitted and were justified. He stated that any councilor submitting unnecessary complaints should be identified.

The Mayor stated that it was interesting to see that crime had reduced in the Newport Ward, but it was too early to tell if this was as a result of the introduction of locality working.

He stated that the Standards complaints system was available for instances where any attempts to resolve a complaint informally, had failed. He reiterated the cost involved, in terms of time and money, for investigating complaints against councillors, and he urged councillors to be responsible in terms of the use of the Standards complaints system.

Councillor Hellaoui stated that given the increased rate of Covid infections, it was ill-advised for councillors to be meeting in the Council Chamber for the Council meeting. Not very councillor had carried out a lateral flow test or was wearing a face mask. Councillor Hellaoui stated that in her view, councillors were placing themselves at risk, by meeting in the Council Chamber.

Councillor Hellaoui stated that the queues at the Newport Hub for people wanting to receive a vaccination were long, but very well managed. The pop up hubs and locality working were working very well.

The Mayor stated that it was important to try and get things back to normal, but the Council would not take unnecessary risks. The air conditioning was working in the Council Chamber and both doors were open.

Councillor Coupe referred to the fact that some people were not wearing masks when visiting the supermarket, or carry out social distancing, and this might lead to a further lockdown. The cancellation of operations in hospitals would have an effect on the health service for some time to come.

In terms of the number of complaints being submitted, Councillor Coupe stated that councillors often had differing political opinions, and that was acceptable. If people in the community were of the view that councillors were complaining about each other regularly, it might prevent new candidates putting themselves forward to stand as a councillor.

Councillor Bell stated that he echoed the sentiments of the Mayor with regards to the issues in Hemlington Ward. The police were working with the Neighbourhood Safety Team with regard to the anti-social behaviour and more people were coming forward to make a complaint. Councillor Bell stated that he would like to see a greater presence in terms of Street Wardens, the police and the Council's Enforcement Team in the Hemlington area.

21/62

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 meeting (Sections 3 and 4).

Question on the Mayor's Executive Member report

Councillor Uddin in relation to Looked After Children

Councillor Uddin queried whether foster carers had been invited to take part in the Life-story work and the Berri training that had recently been delivered to staff? He thanked the foster carers for their commitment with regard to looking after children. He also congratulated the fostering/adoption team on securing three Adoption Orders this month.

Councillor Uddin also referred to the Adoption Tees Valley Annual Report 2020-2021 which reported that, in total 17 children had been placed on a fostering for adoption basis, prior to the Court authorisation to place for adoption, and he congratulated the teams involved in the fostering/adoption process on their efforts.

The Mayor stated that he joined Councillor Uddin in congratulating the foster carers for assisting in looking after children in care. Children thrived better in a stable family unit. The Mayor advised that he was not sure if foster carers did receive the same training as staff, but he would look into it and report back to Councillor Uddin.

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

Councillor Thompson in relation to Events

Councillor Thompson referred to the details of various events that had been held in the town that had been included in the Executive Member's report. Councillor Thompson queried why there was no reference in the report to the 'Walk and Talk' event held at the Dorman Museum to celebrate Black History month. Councillor Thompson also queried whether there had been any training on black history issues.

The Executive Member advised that she had been aware of the event held at the Dorman Museum but had been unable to attend due to a prior engagement. The Executive Member stated that it was important to celebrate different cultures and she advised that she would encourage people from all different cultures or political persuasion to become a councillor.

The Black History Youth Awards were due to be held on Friday to honour exceptional achievement of black youths in the Tees Valley. There were a number of different events and initiatives that had been organised to celebrate black history month in the libraries and community hubs and the libraries were promoting black literature. In response to why the event at the Dorman Museum had not been referenced in the report, the Executive Member advised that there was so many different events taking place in the town, it would be difficult to include them all in the report. The Executive Member advised that she would ensure that it was included in next year's report.

Councillor Furness in relation to Albert Park.

Councillor Furness made reference to the fact that the tennis courts located in Albert Park were due to be refurbished. He queried with regard to whether facilities for more diverse activities such as basketball or skateboarding could be included in the park in the future.

The Executive Member advised that Albert Park was a great asset to the town. The Executive advised that she had recently visited Albert Park, along with the Mayor to look at the croquet club, which was the largest in the North. The Council had recently committed £100k funding to deliver capital improvements to the park, which included improvements to the visitors centre, park signage and the lake. The work was due to be completed by March 2022. An application for funding had also been submitted to the Lawn Tennis Association towards the refurbishment of the tennis courts, and it was hoped that the facility would be free to use. The Executive Member advised that the Council was always open to new ideas for improvements to Albert Park.

Councillor Cooke regarding locality working

Councillor Cooke referred to the 15 incidents of anti-social behaviour that had been reported in the Newport Ward and the fact that only one of the incidents had been captured on CCTV. He queried whether the amount of CCTV in the Ward was sufficient or whether all of the cameras located in the Ward were in working order.

The Executive Member advised that the number of CCTV cameras varied across each ward. Schemes were available to increase the amount of CCTV in the town.

In terms of the concept of locality working, a report was due to be submitted to the Executive with regards to the issue of locality working and the effectiveness of the scheme.

The Mayor advised that not every camera in the town had been installed by the Council. A camera had been installed on Cass House Road because of issues of anti-social behaviour but it had been damaged twice. The Council intended to install a Belfast camera in order to prevent tampering and damage to the camera. Funding of £300k would be available in the near future to be used to install additional cameras across the town.

Question on the Executive Member for Education report

Councillor P Storey regarding the shortfall in school places in 2022.

Cllr Storey queried with regard to what plans were in place to deal with the 200 place shortfall for children starting secondary school in Middlesbrough in 2022.

The Mayor advised that the demand for secondary school places was greater than had been anticipated. A new school was due to be built in St Hilda's, and building would commence in a matter of months but it would take up to two years to build it which would mean that there would be a temporary pressure in respect of secondary school places in Middlesbrough. Officers had however worked hard with the secondary schools to find short and medium term solutions so that no child would be without a school place in 2022.

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

Councillor Arundale regarding the Transporter Bridge

Councillor Arundale referred to the work that had previously been carried out by Atkins to secure angle bracing on the bridge, so he was unsure as to why further work on the bridge was required by Rapid Engineering.

The Executive Member advised that in December 2020, Middlesbrough Council and Stockton Council had committed £650k to make urgent repairs to the bridge which included repairing welds that were cracked to make them safe. To ensure that the bridge was in full working order then more money would need to be spent. A report was needed to ascertain the full costs of repairing the bridge, which would be submitted to full Council for approval.

Councillor Arundale stated that in his view, the bridge was outdated and the costs involved in repairing the bridge could involve millions of pounds.

Councillor Rooney regarding Strategic

Councillor Rooney referred to the number of acronyms included in the Executive Member's report and requested that in future, names are included in full with the acronym listed after.

Councillor Cooke regarding Human Resources

Councillor Cooke queried with regard to how long it had been since the Council staff had been surveyed and whether the Executive Member could provide details of the outcome of any surveys. The Executive Member advised that he would make some inquiries and provide a response to Councillor Cooke in due course.

Questions on the Executive Member for Regeneration report.

Councillor Arundale regarding TeesAMP

Councillor Arundale stated that he was delighted to see the progress with the TeesAMP site and he congratulated all those involved in making the site a success.

The Executive Member stated that there was only one unit vacant and there were three interested parties. The units were bringing in substantial rent to the Council.

Councillor Furness regarding Stainton Way Toucan Crossing.

Councillor Furness stated that the schemes, such as the Members Small Scheme Allocation Fund, that allowed members to bid for crossings made the town a safer place. One crossing had been installed following a request from Councillor J Walker following an accident. Councillor Furness stated that he would like to see more accessible crossings installed across the town, without members having to bid for them.

The Executive Member stated that traffic calming measures needed to be installed to prevent accidents. Progress was being made but it took time, money and manpower for systems to be installed.

21/63 **REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

The Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Board presented 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.

21/64 **FLEXIBLE USE OF CAPITAL RECEIPTS STRATEGY**

The Executive Member for Environment, Finance and Governance presented a report which sought the approval of a proposed Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy.

Under the Statutory Guidance on the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts, full Council was required to approve the Council's Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy.

Details of the individual projects which were planned to be funded from the flexible use of capital receipts, in accordance with the Guidance, were included within the report.

Councillor Rooney requested clarification with regard to what members were being asked to approve.

The Director of Finance advised that the flexible use of capital receipts was a back-up plan to increase reserves by £5.1m. It provided an extra buffer for the Council however, if the reserves proved not to be required in the future then the process could be reversed.

Councillor Hellaoui queried with regard to the impact on the Capital Funding Budget. The Director of Finance advised that instead of funding projects with capital receipts, it would be funded by borrowing at a cost of interest of £200k per year.

The Mayor advised that the flexible use of capital receipts would give the Council some flexibility by boosting reserves and although the Council might not be required to use the reserves, it provided a safety net, should it be required.

The Director of Finance advised that the current figures did not indicate that the Council would need to use the flexibility but future costs and income had become more uncertain. The increase in the revenue reserves held by the Council would provide insulation against any future unexpected financial pressures.

Councillor Hellaoui queried with regard to how the Council could be certain that they were getting value for money.

The Director of Finance advised that whenever the Council was required to borrow money, it always made full use of the market to ensure that it secured the best rates available. In order to achieve this the finance was usually borrowed using a mixture of short term and long term loans.

Councillor S Walker stated that he was in favour of the principle of the flexible use of capital receipts. He stated that he fully appreciated that Children's Services were in need of funding, but was concerned that capital receipts were being used to fund a service that continually required additional funding.

The Director of Finance advised that the reason why the majority of spending was in relation to Children's Services was because it would help support the significant and continued transformation work currently taking place within the Council which commenced as a result of the Ofsted Improvement Plan. The transformation work would assist in delivering improvement and efficiencies to the service.

Following a vote, it was **ORDERED** as follows:

That the proposed Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy be approved.

21/65 **ADOPTION OF THE MARTON WEST NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - 2021-2029**

The Executive Member for Regeneration, Councillor Polano presented a report, the purpose of which was that the Council adopt the Marton West Neighbourhood Plan 2021-2029, as part of the Council's Policy Framework, so that the Plan could be used in the determination of future planning applications within the designated Marton West Neighbourhood Area.

Following a vote, it was **ORDERED** as follows:

That the Marton West Neighbourhood Plan 2021-2029 be adopted, as part of the Council's Policy Framework, so that the Plan could be used in the determination of future planning applications within the designated Marton West Neighbourhood Area.

21/66 **URGENT ITEMS**

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

21/67 **MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME**

The Chair announced that one question had been received from a member of the Council. The detail of the specific question was included at Agenda Item 12.

Question 8/21 - Councillor Thompson to the Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for Culture and Communities regarding progress to date of the Middlesbrough Lottery with regard to the uptake, ticket sales and the benefits that the organisations that had signed up had received?

The Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for Culture and Communities advised that the first weekly draw of the Middlesbrough Lottery took place on September 4th. As of October 15th the lottery had 635 players purchasing a total of 1,264 tickets each week.

Based on the current uptake, the lottery was on track to raise almost £40k for good causes around Middlesbrough per year. 50p from every £1 ticket was donated to the good cause of the player's choice, with 10p from every £1 ticket coming to the council to support cultural activity.

Players could choose to donate the full 60p proceeds to the council's fund and 225 players were choosing to do so. The council had received a payment of over £1k for the past month.

In terms of other good causes, 43 organisations had signed up so far. The three most popular with players so far, were My Sister's Place, Marton Community Centre Group and Bloodrun EVS.

Each organisation was required to set their own funding target. A tracker was available on the Council website for people to log on to see the progress of each organisation in terms of achieving their funding target.

21/68 **NOTICE OF MOTIONS**

The Chair advised that he had received a request for Motion 150 to be withdrawn, as the proposer and seconder of the Motion were unable to attend the meeting. The Chair advised that he had consented to the withdrawal of the Motion, due to the absence of the proposer and seconder.

21/69 **NOTICE OF URGENT MOTIONS (IF ANY)**

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