

COUNCIL
23rd March 2017

PRESENT – The Mayor; Councillors Baldwin, Carson, Cartwright, Copeland, Coultas, Crichlow, Crudass, Crumbie, Mrs. Culley, Curry, Dixon, Galletley, Grundy, Harker, I. Haszeldine, L. Haszeldine, C. L. B. Hughes, Johnson, Kane, Kelley, Kelly, Knowles, Lawton, Lee, Lyonette, McEwan, Mills, Newall, K. Nicholson, M. Nicholson, Nutt, E. A. Richmond, S. Richmond, A. J. Scott, Mrs. H. Scott, Storr, C. Taylor, J. Taylor, Tostevin, Wallis and Wright. (42)

APOLOGIES – Councillors Cossins, Donoghue, L. Hughes, Mrs. D. Jones, Lister, Regan, Stenson and York. (8)

59. MINUTES – Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meetings of this Council, held on 26 January and 17 28 February 2017.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes be approved as correct records.

60. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – Councillors Copeland, Dixon, Harker, C. Hughes, McEwan, A. Scott and Wallis each declared a pecuniary interest in Minute 65(b) below, as a Member of Cabinet, as the role of Sole Trustee of the Crown Street Library is a role that is discharged by Cabinet on behalf of the Council.

Councillor Curry declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 65(b) below, as a member of the ‘Friends of Darlington Library’ group.

Councillor Mrs. H. Scott clarified that, as a non-voting member of the Cabinet, she had no interest in Minute 65(b) below.

61. ORDER OF SEALING DOCUMENTS – Presented – The Register showing the documents which had been sealed since the last meeting of Council.

62. ANNOUNCEMENTS – (1) Death of Former Mayor and Councillor Eric Roberts - The Mayor reported on the death of former Mayor and Councillor Eric Roberts, who had sadly passed away, and referred to Eric’s years of service, and roles on the Council.

The Mayor also acknowledged the recent terrorist attack at Westminster, and relayed a message of condolence received from the Mayor of Amiens, one of Darlington’s twin towns.

As a mark of respect, Members held a short silence in memory of former Mayor and Councillor Eric Roberts, and those lost in the terrorist activity.

(2) Local Government Chronicle Award for Driving Growth – The Mayor announced that the Council had won the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Award for ‘Driving Growth’, and reported that the Council had been praised for its partnership working and economic strategy at the Awards Ceremony in London on 8 March 2017.

63. QUESTIONS – TO ANSWER QUESTIONS (WHERE NOTICE HAS BEEN GIVEN) FROM – (1) The Public – There were twelve questions, with notice, from members of the public, who received an answer thereon.

NOTE: At the discretion of the Mayor, the order of business was varied to take these questions immediately prior to Minute 65(b) below.

(2) Members to Cabinet/Chairs – There were no questions from Members, where notice had been given, for the Mayor, Members of the Cabinet, or the Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees.

(3) Police, Crime and Victims’ Commissioner for Durham and Darlington – The Mayor reported that the Police, Crime and Victims’ Commissioner for Durham and Darlington, had submitted his apologies for the meeting and that he had circulated a report to all Members.

64. COUNCIL REPORTS – (1) Pay Policy Statement 2017/2018 – The Director of Neighbourhood Services and Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) seeking approval of the Pay Policy Statement for the financial year 2017/2018, in line with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011, and the Local Government Transparency Code 2014.

The submitted report stated that the Localism Act 2011 required the Council to agree a written Pay Policy on an annual basis, and that the Council publish specific information relating to the lowest and highest paid employees. The proposed Pay Policy for 2017/18 was appended to the submitted report.

RESOLVED – That the Pay Policy 2017/18 be approved, and that the Pay Policy be published on the Council’s intranet for public access.

REASON – To comply with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011.

(2) Request for Extension of Non-Attendance – Councillor Stenson - The Director of Neighbourhood Services and Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) to enable Members to consider an application on behalf of Councillor Stenson for an extension to the six-month period of his non-attendance at meetings, due to ill health.

The submitted report outlined that Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 states that if a Member of a Local Authority fails throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of his or her last attendance to attend any meeting of the authority, he or she shall, unless the failure was due to some reason approved

by the authority before the expiry of that period, cease to be a Member of that authority.

It was reported that Councillor Stenson had not attended any Council or Committee meetings since 29 September 2016, and consequently would cease to be a Member of the Council on 28 March 2017, unless the Council approves the reason for the failure to attend before that date.

RESOLVED – That an extension of six months be agreed, with a further review at that time.

REASON – To ensure compliance with a request from a Member under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972.

65. CABINET REPORTS – (a) Overview Reports of Cabinet Members – The Cabinet Members each gave a report (previously circulated) on the main areas of work undertaken under their relevant portfolio during the previous cycle of meetings. Cabinet Members answered questions on their portfolios.

(b) The Library Service – The Director of Neighbourhood Services and Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) to consider recommendations in relation to the Library Service in Darlington.

The submitted report stated that in June, as part of last year's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), proposals were considered by Members about the library service, and that it was agreed that the Crown Street Library be relocated to the Dolphin Centre, that Cockerton Library be closed, and that the Mobile Library Service cease. It was reported that it was decided by Cabinet in September 2016 not to implement the library service proposals, but to continue to develop them, to update Members about the Crown Street building, and for all proposals to be brought back to Members, with additional information, to enable new decisions to be made.

The submitted report outlined further consultation that had taken place about how a relocated library at the Dolphin Centre might look and operate. The submitted report also stated that a volunteer model for Cockerton Library had been developed, making the library a community library run by volunteers with support from the Library Service. It was stated that this matter was once again considered by Cabinet on 17 January 2017, and by the Efficiency and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 31 January 2017 (as a result of the Cabinet decision being 'called in'), and was subsequently considered by Cabinet again on 7 March 2017.

RESOLVED – (a) That the decisions made by Cabinet at their meeting of 7 March 2017, be supported.

(b) That the Library Plan for 2017-2021, be approved.

(c) That an allocation of a capital sum of £1.7million to relocate the Central Library to the Dolphin Centre be approved.

REASONS – (a) To enable the Council to achieve the savings identified in the Medium Term Financial Plan.

(b) To meet the statutory obligation to provide for Library Services.

(c) For the Library Plan to be updated to give future direction and to enable the library service to be positioned as an efficiently run and modern service which is responsive to the changing nature of library use.

(c) Council Tax Empty Property Discount - The Director of Neighbourhood Services and Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) to approve the withdrawal of the Council Tax discount for empty and unfurnished properties from 1 April 2017, following consultation.

The submitted report stated that Cabinet agreed to consult on the withdrawal of the Council Tax discount for empty and unfurnished properties at its meeting on 13 December 2016, and that the responses to the consultation were minimal, with only four responses received. It was reported that the withdrawal of the Council Tax discount for empty and unfurnished properties was subsequently considered and endorsed by Cabinet on 7 February 2017.

RESOLVED – (a) That the results of the public consultation and equality impact assessment be considered.

(b) That the withdrawal of the Council Tax discount for empty and unfurnished properties from 1 April 2017, be approved.

REASONS – (a) The Council has the flexibility to set and review Council Tax discounts for empty and unfurnished properties.

(b) The financial position of the Council has not improved and therefore the withdrawal of the Council Tax empty property discount is appropriate.

66. SCRUTINY REPORTS – OVERVIEW REPORTS – The five Scrutiny Committee Chairs each submitted a report (previously circulated) on the main areas of work undertaken by their relevant Scrutiny Committee during the last cycle of Committee meetings.

67. NOTICE OF MOTION - The following Motion was moved by Councillor Dixon, and seconded by Councillor Mrs. H. Scott:

International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of Anti-semitism

“That this Council adopts the following non-legally binding, working definition of anti-semitism, as drafted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA):

Anti-semitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-semitism are directed

toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”

The Motion was put to the meeting and carried.

68. MEMBERSHIP CHANGES – Consideration was given to membership changes of the Committees, Subsidiary Bodies and Other Bodies for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2016/17.

RESOLVED – That Councillor Knowles be appointed to the Police and Crime Panel in place of Councillor Ian Haszeldine.