

COUNCIL

Thursday, 26 January 2023

PRESENT – The Mayor, Councillors Ali, Bartch, Bell, Boddy, Dr. Chou, Clarke, Crudass, Mrs Culley, Donoghue, Dulston, Durham, Harker, Haszeldine, Heslop, Holroyd, C L B Hughes, L Hughes, Johnson, B Jones, Mrs D Jones, Keir, Laing, Layton, Lee, Marshall, McCollom, McEwan, Newall, K Nicholson, M Nicholson, Renton, A J Scott, Mrs H Scott, Snedker, Sowerby, Tait, Tostevin, Wallis, Willis and Wright.

APOLOGIES – Councillors Allen, Cossins, Crumbie, Lister, Lucas, Paley and Preston.

ABSENT – Councillors Baldwin and Mills.

47 **MINUTES - TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS COUNCIL HELD ON 24 NOVEMBER 2022**

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Council held on 24 November 2022.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Council held on 24 November 2022, be approved as a correct record.

48 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.**

Councillors Mrs. D. Jones and Mrs. H. Scott each declared a Non Registerable Interest in Minute 52 (3), below.

49 **SEALING.**

Presented – The Register showing the documents which had been sealed since the last meeting of Council.

50 **ANNOUNCEMENTS.**

Holocaust Memorial Day 2023 – The Mayor acknowledged Holocaust Memorial Day, which was due to take place on Friday, 27th January 2023, and would mark the 78th Anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

The Mayor informed Members that this important anniversary would be commemorated in Darlington at memorial service at St. Aiden's Church of England Academy, which had been organised by the Celebrating Communities group.

Refuge – The Mayor advised Members that there were still places available at the Benefits Dinner for the Refuge.

51 **QUESTIONS - TO ANSWER QUESTIONS (WHERE APPROPRIATE NOTICE HAS BEEN GIVEN FROM):-**

(1) **THE PUBLIC;**

There were no questions, with notice, from Members of the Public.

(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.

52 COUNCIL REPORTS.

(1) COUNCIL TAX CALCULATION OF TAX BASE 2023/24

The Group Director of Operations submitted a report (previously circulated) to determine the Council's tax base for 2023/24.

The submitted report stated that, in accordance with Section 33 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 2012, the Council had to decide its tax base by 31 January in the year preceding that for which the tax base applies.

RESOLVED - (a) That the report for the calculation of the Council's tax base for the year 2023/24, be approved.

(b) That the tax base for the Council of 34,814.5 and the individual tax base for the parishes, as set out at Appendix 2 of the submitted report, be approved.

REASON - The recommendations are supported to comply with statutory requirements, enabling the Council Tax for 2023/24 to be set by Council in February 2023.

(2) CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S APPRAISAL

The Assistant Director Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that the recommendation of the Appraisal Sub-Group in respect of the Chief Executive's Performance Appraisal, be endorsed.

The submitted report stated that the Appraisal Sub-Group met on 16 December 2022 to consider the Chief Executive's Performance Appraisal in accordance with the previously agreed process, and outlined the recommendation of the Appraisal Sub-Group.

RESOLVED - That Council note that the Appraisal Sub-Group has met to consider the Chief Executive's Appraisal for 2022/23, and agreed that the Chief Executive will focus on the following key themes for the year ahead, namely :-

- (i) ensuring governance arrangements of all Council activities and the Council's financial position remains positive;
- (ii) preparing for the Quality Care Commission inspection of Adult Social Care;
- (iii) agile working and efficiencies from implementation;
- (iv) implementation of the Integrated Care Board into the organisation; and
- (v) further investigation of partnerships with local voluntary sector organisations.

REASON - To enable the appraisal to be confirmed.

(3) ADMISSION AS HONORARY FREEWOMAN

The Chief Executive submitted a report (previously circulated) recommending that the service of two Councillors and one former Councillor be recognised, by admitting Councillors Mrs. Heather Scott OBE, Mrs Doris Jones BEM and former Councillor Mrs Dorothy Long, as 'Honorary Freewoman' of Darlington.

The submitted report stated that the Local Government Act 1972 enabled the Council to admit 'persons of distinction' and persons who have 'rendered eminent service' to the Borough as an 'Honorary Freeman' or 'Honorary Freewoman' of Darlington. It was noted that the title of Honorary Freeman or Freewoman was the highest civic honour that the Council was able to bestow.

The submitted report stated that a Special Meeting of the Council would need to be convened, whereat two-thirds of Members present must vote in favour of the resolution.

RESOLVED – (a) That Councillors Mrs. Heather Scott OBE, Mrs. Doris Jones BEM and former Councillor Mrs. Dorothy Long be admitted to the title of 'Honorary Freewoman of Darlington' as a fitting way to recognise and honour the service of those individuals.

(b) That a Special Meeting of the Council be convened in February 2023, to enable Members to formally vote (with a two-thirds majority) on a resolution that Councillors Mrs. Heather Scott OBE, Mrs. Doris Jones BEM and former Councillor Mrs. Dorothy Long be admitted to the title of 'Honorary Freewoman of Darlington'.

(c) That the Assistant Director, Law and Governance be authorised to finalise the arrangements for the Special meeting of the Council, the conferment of the award and titles, and an appropriate event to follow on from that meeting.

REASONS - (a) To recognise the long and eminent service of those individuals by the conferment of the title of 'Honorary Freewoman'.

(b) To enable decisions to be made in compliance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972.

53 CABINET REPORTS.

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.

54 MID YEAR PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT MONITORING REPORT 2022/23

The Group Director of Operations submitted a report (previously circulated) on the revised Treasury Management Strategy, Prudential Indicators and to provide a half-yearly review of

the Council's borrowing and investment activities.

The submitted report stated that the mandatory Prudential Code, which governs Council borrowing, required Council approval of controls, called Prudential Indicators, relating to capital spending and borrowing. It was reported that the Prudential Indicators were set in three statutory annual reports to Council, and the submitted report followed the Council's approval in February 2022 of the 2022/23 Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Strategy.

The submitted report highlighted that the key objectives of the three annual reports were to ensure that governance of the large amounts of public money under the Council's Treasury Management activities complied with legislation and met the high standards set out in the codes of practice, to ensure that borrowing was affordable, and to report performance of the key activities of borrowing and investments.

The submitted report also outlined revisions to the Prudential Indicators in terms of a reduction to Operational Boundary to £156.699M, and a reduction to the Authorised Limit to £239.879M to allow for any additional cashflow requirement. It was noted that investments included £30M in property funds, which were expected to increase the Council's net return on investments by around £0.340M in future years.

RESOLVED - (a) That the revised Prudential Indicators and limits in Tables 1 to 6, 8, 10 and 12 to 17 of the submitted report be approved.

(b) That the Treasury Management Budget (Financing Costs) projected outturn, shown in Table 11, be noted.

(c) That the updated Prudential Indicators be approved.

REASONS - (a) In order to comply with the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities;

(b) To inform Members of the performance of the Treasury Management function;

(c) To comply with the Local Government Act 2003;

(d) To enable further improvements to be made in the Council's Treasury Management function.

55 CLIMATE CHANGE PROGRESS

The Chief Executive submitted a report (previously circulated) to update Council on progress towards the Council's net zero target.

The submitted report advised that a Sustainability and Climate Change Lead Officer had been appointed in late January 2020, and that the Climate Change Strategy was adopted in July 2020, and that working with lead officers across the Council, an action plan was produced and adopted in October 2021. It was reported that a trajectory of 30% reduction in the Council's emission every five years was agreed at Cabinet in October 2021, with the next

update due to be reported in the July 2023 report to Cabinet and Council.

The submitted report stated that milestones had been developed and were being used by the Climate Change Officer to monitor progress, and that the Climate Change Officer would continue to work with lead officers to develop the milestones for 2023/24. A number of key actions were subsequently outlined within the report.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

REASON – To monitor the progress of the Council in terms of delivering on its own Declaration

56 TOWN CENTRE PARKING OFFER

The Group Director of Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide an update to Members on the town centre car parking offer and sought a budget variation and funding release.

The submitted report outlined that parking offers had been in place in various pay and display locations to support the town centre since June 2018, and that since January 2021 the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) had provided the funding to support parking offers across the Tees Valley for a two-year period. It was noted that in November 2022, Cabinet had agreed to fund an extension of the parking offer from January 2023 until the end of March 2023.

The submitted report stated that the sustainability of the town centre was an immediate priority, and that there was a strong desire that the Council continue to support and encourage use of the town centre. It was reported that on 10 January 2023, Cabinet had agreed a further extension of the parking offer for a further three months, from 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023, subject to Council varying the budget and releasing the funding as the further extension of the parking offer exceeded Cabinet's delegated authority to vary the budget.

RESOLVED – That the variation to the budget be approved, and that £387k be released to enable the current parking offer to be extended a further 3 months, from 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023, and that parking charges be reintroduced on 1 July 2023.

REASON – To support the ongoing recovery of the town centre.

57 SCRUTINY REPORTS - TO CONSIDER SCRUTINY OVERVIEW REPORTS:-

The 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, and responded to any questions thereon.

58 MEMBERSHIP CHANGES - TO CONSIDER ANY MEMBERSHIP CHANGES TO COMMITTEES, SUBSIDIARY BODIES AND OTHER BODIES.

Consideration was given to membership changes of the Committees, Subsidiary Bodies and

Other Bodies for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2022/23.

RESOLVED – (a) That Councillor Marshall fill the Conservative vacancies on the Southern ICS/ICP Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee;

(b) That Councillor Marshall replace Councillor Bartch on the Planning Applications Committee.