

## COUNCIL

Thursday, 28 January 2021

**PRESENT** – The Mayor, Councillors Ali, Allen, Bartch, Boddy, Dr. Chou, Clarke, Cossins, Crudass, Crumbie, Mrs Culley, Curry, Donoghue, Dulston, Durham, Harker, Haszeldine, Heslop, Holroyd, C L B Hughes, L Hughes, Johnson, B Jones, Mrs D Jones, Keir, Laing, Layton, Lee, Lister, Lucas, Marshall, McCollom, Mills, Newall, K Nicholson, M Nicholson, Paley, Preston, Renton, A J Scott, Mrs H Scott, Snedker, Tait, Tostevin, Wallis and Wright.

**APOLOGIES** – Councillors Baldwin, Bell and Howell.

### 43 **MINUTES - TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS COUNCIL HELD ON 26 NOVEMBER 2020**

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Council held on 26 November 2020.

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Council held on 26 November 2020, be approved as a correct record.

### 44 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.**

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

### 45 **SEALING.**

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

### 46 **ANNOUNCEMENTS.**

**Death in Service** - The Mayor reported on the Death in Service of Steven Taylor, who had sadly passed away on the 8th January 2021. The Mayor advised that Steven joined the Council on 11 March 2019, and worked as a Cleaner in the Dolphin Centre. It was reported that Steven was a well-respected member of the team, and would be greatly missed. As a mark of respect, Members observed a short silence in memory of Mr. Taylor.

**Holocaust Memorial Day 2021** – The Mayor acknowledged Holocaust Memorial Day, which had taken place the previous day, and marked the 76<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

The Mayor advised Members that, due to the current restrictions around the Coronavirus pandemic, the National Ceremony had been a virtual event, with the theme of 'Be the Light in the Darkness', and that households up and down the country had lit candles at 8pm to remember those who were murdered for who they were, and to make a stand against prejudice and hatred.

**The Queen's New Year Honours 2021** – The Mayor advised Members that Stuart Errington, Chief Fire Officer, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue

Service, had been awarded the Queen's Fire Service Medal in the Queen's New Year Honours.

**RESOLVED** – That the congratulations of the Council be conveyed to Mr. Errington for the receipt of his Award.

**Appointment of Director of Children and Adult Services** – The Mayor informed Members that, since the last meeting of the Council, James Stroyan had been appointed to the post of Director of Children and Adult Services on a permanent basis, and congratulated Mr. Stroyan on his appointment.

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

**(1) THE PUBLIC;**

There were nine questions, with notice, from Members of the Public, who each received an answer thereon.

**(Note:** The questions, with notice, were asked by The Mayor on behalf of the Members of the Public, in accordance with Paragraph 27 of the Meetings (Coronavirus) Protocol).

**(2) MEMBERS TO CABINET/CHAIRS;**

Councillor Newell asked a question to Councillor K. Nicholson, Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Health and Housing, and Councillor K. Nicholson replied.

**48 COUNCIL REPORTS.**

**(1) COUNCIL TAX CALCULATION OF TAX BASE 2021/22**

The Managing Director submitted a report (previously circulated) to determine the Council's tax base for 2021/22.

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 calculation of the Council's tax base for the year 2021/22, be approved.

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

**REASON** - To comply with statutory requirements, enabling the Council Tax for 2021/22 to be set by Council in February 2021.

**49 CABINET REPORTS.**

The Cabinet Members each gave a report (previously circulated) on the main areas of work undertaken under their relevant portfolio since the previous meeting of the Council. Members answered questions on their portfolio thereon.

**(1) REVISION TO THE COUNCIL'S SENIOR MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE**

The Managing Director submitted a report (previously circulated) proposing a new Senior Management Structure for the Council, and to recommend appointments to three posts.

The submitted report presented a new senior structure which had been developed with input from Cabinet to better align with the Council's priorities, and realigned services to ensure delivery of priorities. The submitted report recommended the creation of a post of Chief Executive which had the lead for Economic Growth, as well as the Head of Paid Service.

The submitted report also included a proposal to create a Group Director for Operations and a Group Director of Services, and recommended the deletion of the posts of Managing Director and Assistant Director of Housing and Building Services, following the retirement of the current postholders. A new post of Assistant Director (Housing and Revenues) was to be created by merging the existing Head of Housing and Revenues post with the relevant responsibilities previously held by the Assistant Director of Housing and Building Services.

The submitted report included recommendations as to the appointments to the newly created roles.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the Senior Management Structure, as set out in Appendix A of the submitted report, be approved, with an implementation date of 1 June 2021.

(b) That the views of the Human Resources Committee be noted.

(c) That the appointment of Ian Williams as Chief Executive be approved.

(d) That the appointment of Elizabeth Davison as Group Director of Operations be approved.

(e) That the appointment of Anthony Sandys as Assistant Director (Housing and Revenues) be approved.

(f) That power be delegated the Assistant Director Law and Governance to make any consequential changes to the Constitution that are needed.

**REASON** – To amend the structure and to make key internal appointments.

**(2) MID YEAR PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT MONITORING REPORT 2020/21**

The Managing Director 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 2020 of the 2020/21 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 £188.018M, and a reduction to the Authorised Limit to £229.233M to allow for any additional cashflow requirement. It was noted that investments now included £30M in property funds, which were expected to increase the Council's net return on investments by around £0.500M in future years.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the revised prudential indicators and limits within the report in Tables 1 to 6, 8, 11 and 13 to 18 be approved.

(b) That the proposal detailed in Paragraph 32 of the submitted report, in relation to the potential of Darlington College accessing the Council's loan facility in accordance with the Capital Strategy, be noted.

(c) That the underspend in the Treasury Management Budget (Financing Costs) of £0.110M, as detailed in Table 12, be noted.

**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.

## **50 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.

## **51 NOTICE OF MOTION**

### **(1) TO CONSIDER A MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR L. HUGHES, AND SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR C. L. B. HUGHES**

The following Motion was moved by Councillor L. Hughes, and seconded by Councillor C. L. B. Hughes:

‘That this Council notes:

This April the Government plan to cut the benefit level for millions of claimants by ending of the time limited increase to the basic rate of Universal Credit (and the tax credit equivalent) announced by the Chancellor on 20th March 2020 as part of his pandemic response package.

The £20 a week boost reflected the reality that the level of benefits were not adequate to protect the swiftly increasing number of households relying on them as the crisis hit. Exactly because that increase was a very significant and welcome move to bolster low- and middle-income families living standards, its removal will be a huge loss.

Pressing ahead would see the level of unemployment support fall to its lowest real-terms level since 1990-91, and it’s lowest ever relative to average earnings. Indeed, the basic level of out-of-work support prior to the March boost was – at £73 a week (£3,800 a year) – less than half the absolute poverty line.

The increase in benefits have had a positive effect on the lives of thousands of local claimants who are better able to pay for life’s essentials such as food, clothing and utilities.

The local economy has also benefited from the increase in benefit levels as claimants spend their money locally thereby supporting local businesses and jobs.

That this Council resolves to:

- (a) Write to the Chancellor, Rushi Sunak and to the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson demanding that the £20 increase to Universal Credit is made permanent and extended to claimants on legacy benefits.
- (b) Work with other local government organisations to form a coalition to pressure the government to make the £20 increase to Universal Credit permanent.

The Motion was Carried.

## **52 MEMBERSHIP CHANGES - TO CONSIDER ANY MEMBERSHIP CHANGES TO COMMITTEES, SUBSIDIARY BODIES AND OTHER BODIES.**

There were no membership changes reported at the meeting.