

## COUNCIL

Thursday, 30 November 2023

**PRESENT** – The Mayor, Councillors Ali, Allen, Anderson, Baker, Bartch, Beckett, Coe, Crudass, Crumbie, Curry, Dillon, Donoghue, Dulston, Durham, Garner, Harker, Haszeldine, Henderson, Holroyd, Johnson, Kane, Keir, Layton, Mahmud, Mammolotti, Marshall, McCollom, McEwan, McGill, K Nicholson, M Nicholson, Porter, Ray, Renton, Dr. Riley, Robinson, Roche, Mrs Scott, Snedker, Storr, Toms, Tostevin, Wallis and Walters.

**APOLOGIES** – Councillors Mrs Culley, Laing, Lawley, Lee and Pease.

### 38 **MINUTES - TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS COUNCIL HELD ON 28 SEPTEMBER 2023**

**Submitted** – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Council held on 28 September 2023.

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Council held on 28 September 2023, be approved as a correct record.

### 39 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.**

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

### 40 **SEALING.**

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

### 41 **ANNOUNCEMENTS.**

**Remembrance of those lost in Conflict** – The Mayor invited Members to observe a minute's silence in remembrance of those lost in the conflicts in Palestine and Israel, and in Ukraine.

**Mayor's Carol Concert – Sunday, 17 December 2023** – The Mayor reminded Members of the Mayor's Carol Concert, which was scheduled to take place at 6pm on Sunday, 17th December at St. Cuthbert's Church. The Mayor advised that the service was open to everyone in the town, and that all monies raised from the collection plate would be shared between the Mayoral charities and St Cuthbert's Church.

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

#### (1) **THE PUBLIC;**

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

#### (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.

**43 COUNCIL REPORTS.**

There were no reports to be decided by Council, which had not been considered by Cabinet.

**44 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.

**45 COUNCIL TAX CHANGES TO EMPTY PROPERTY PREMIUMS 2024-25**

The Group Director of Operations submitted a report (previously circulated) which requested approval of proposed changes to Council Tax Empty Property Premiums for 2024-25.

The submitted report stated that a 50% Council Tax premium (additional charge) was introduced in April 2013 for all unoccupied and unfurnished domestic properties which had been empty for 2 years or more, being the maximum that the Council was permitted to charge.

It was reported that new legislation was introduced in 2018 and changes were made to the Council Tax Empty Property Premiums, which were outlined in the submitted report.

The submitted report stated that the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 contained a provision to amend the definition of long-term empty homes, so that from 2024-25 onwards, unfurnished properties that have been empty for one year or more are liable to the Empty Property Premium. In addition, the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 also included a provision to introduce a 100% Council Tax Premium for furnished properties periodically occupied (referred to as "second homes") from 2025-26.

The submitted report set out the proposals for the new Council Tax Empty Property Premiums. It was stated that the report had been considered by Cabinet on 7 November 2023, who agreed its onward submission for approval by Council.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the following changes to the Council Tax Empty Property Premiums be approved:

- (i) Amend the definition of long-term empty homes, so that from 2024-25 onwards, unfurnished properties that have been empty for one year or more are liable to the Council Tax Empty Property Premium from 1 April 2024.
- (ii) Apply a 100% Council Tax Premium to second homes. As 12 months' notice to existing owners of second homes is required, the earliest that the new charges will apply is from 1 April 2025.

- (iii) Implement exemptions for the second homes Council Tax Premium, as set out in paragraphs 14 and 15 of the submitted report.

**REASON** - To further encourage landlords and property owners to bring their empty homes back into use as soon as possible, and to penalise those owners who deliberately leave their properties empty for years.

#### **46 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT - SCHEME APPROVAL 2024-25**

The Group Director of Operations submitted a report (previously circulated) which requested that the Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme for 2024-25 be approved.

The submitted report stated that Councils are required to set a CTS scheme each year, and as part of that exercise they must consider whether any changes should be made to any existing scheme, and, where changes are made, consider what transitional protection, if any, should apply to anyone affected by those changes. The submitted report outlined the details of the proposed CTS scheme for 2024/25.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the contents of the report be noted.

(b) That the CTS scheme for 2024-25, as appended to the submitted report, be approved.

**REASONS** - (a) The Council is required to publish a local CTS scheme for 2024-25 by 11 March 2024.

(b) The CTS schemes since 2013 have all been implemented successfully without any major challenges.

(c) The continued application of a reduced entitlement for working aged people is still appropriate, given the current financial position of the Council.

(**NOTE:** The Mayor used her discretion to vary the Agenda, and took the items at Minute 45 and Minute 46 prior to Minute 44).

#### **47 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.

#### **48 NOTICE OF MOTION**

##### **(1) TO CONSIDER A MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR HOLROYD, AND SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR LAWLEY**

The Motion was withdrawn by Councillor Holroyd at the meeting.

##### **(2) TO CONSIDER A MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR SNEDKER, AND SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR MAMMOLOTTI**

The following Motion was moved by Councillor Snedker, and seconded by Councillor Mammolotti:

## **Stopping Conflict in Israel-Palestine**

### **Preamble**

- a) Palestine has been recognised as a sovereign state by 138 of 193 UN member states;
- b) East Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Golan Heights and Gaza are illegally occupied by Israel; and Gaza has been subject to 16 years of blockade;
- c) the UK, at the UN Security Council on 18 October 2023, refused to vote for “humanitarian pauses” to deliver lifesaving aid to millions in Gaza;
- d) Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, B’tselem and the South African government recognise that the state of Israel is enacting a system of apartheid; and
- e) the capture and detention of civilians without legal process as a form of punishment is a breach of the Fourth 1949 Geneva Convention.

### **This Council therefore believes:-**

- a) all atrocities committed against civilians must be condemned and investigated;
- b) all forms of racism, including anti-Palestinian racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia have no place in our Borough and condemns any attacks on Palestinian, Jewish or Muslim people;
- c) all political leaders have a responsibility to try to prevent genocide; and
- d) the only one way to secure peace between Israelis and Palestinians is for a just political settlement based on the end of the illegal occupation of Palestinian territories and an end to what one UN Special Rapporteur has described as “apartheid practices”, and another has described “settler-colonialism” and “ethnic cleansing”;

### **This Council resolves:-**

- a) to call upon the UK Government to :-
  - a. call for an immediate ceasefire and to vote for this at the UN;
  - b. call for an immediate release of all civilians captured and detained without legal process;
  - c. cease all arms sales to Israel and end military aid for Israel; and
  - d. call on Israel to resume negotiations with the Palestinians;

- b) requests the Chief Executive to submit this Motion to the UK Government.

The following Amendment to the Motion was moved by Councillor Harker, and seconded by Councillor Dr. Riley:

**Preamble**

- a) In recent weeks there has been a dramatic escalation in the conflict in Palestine and Israel.
- b) Many thousands of civilians have been killed and hundreds of hostages taken.
- c) The capture and detention of civilians without legal process as a form of punishment is a breach of the fourth 1949 Geneva Convention.
- d) On Wednesday 22 November, Israel and Hamas agreed a four-day truce.
- e) The situation in Israel and Palestine remains uncertain.

**This Council therefore believes:-**

- a) all atrocities committed against civilians must be condemned and investigated;
- b) all hostages must be released;
- c) It is essential that humanitarian aid is allowed to get through to Gaza;
- d) All people living in Gaza should have access to energy supplies, water, food and medical assistance;
- e) all forms of racism, based on nationality, race, religion or any other basis, including anti-Semitism and Islamophobia have no place in our Borough and condemns any attacks on any individual or community; and
- f) the only one way to secure peace lasting between Israelis and Palestinians is for peace talks based on creating a two-state solution.

**This Council resolves:-**

- a) to call upon the UK Government to :-
  - (i) support all efforts in Israel and Palestine to :-
    - (a) end all violence against civilians;
    - (b) secure the release of all hostages;
    - (c) avert a humanitarian disaster in Gaza; and

(d) bring about a lasting peace, based on a two state solution

(ii) build on existing efforts to raise awareness of and challenge all forms of racism, including anti-Semitism and Islamophobia; and

(iii) support all of our communities to feel safe.

(b) That the Chief Executive be requested to submit this Motion to the UK Government.

At the request of five Members, a Named Vote was taken of those Members present at the meeting and there appeared:

**For the Amendment:** The Mayor; Councillors Allen, Anderson, Baker, Beckett, Coe, Crumbie, Curry, Dillon, Harker, Haszeldine, Johnson, Kane, Layton, McCollom, McEwan, McGill, M. Nicholson, Porter, Dr. Riley and Wallis (21)

**Against the Amendment:** Councillors Ali, Henderson, Holroyd, Mahmud, Mammolotti, Ray, Robinson, Snedker and Toms (9)

**Abstentions:** Councillors Garner, Renton, Roche and Storr (4).

(NOTE: Prior to the consideration of the Motion, and the subsequent vote, Members of the Conservative Group and Councillor K. Nicholson withdrew from the meeting).

The Amendment was Carried.

The Amendment became the Substantive Motion and was put to the meeting and carried.

(NOTE: The Mayor used her discretion to vary the Agenda, and took the items at Minute 48 (1) and Minute 48 (2) immediately following the Questions submitted at Minute 42.

#### **49 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 2023/24 that:

(a) That Councillor Mrs. H. Scott replace Councillor Lee on the Climate Change Group; and

(b) That Councillor Beckett replace Councillor Wallis on the Planning Applications Committee.