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NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING HELD ON

29th July, 2021

Present:

Councillor Hasthorpe (in the Chair)
Councillors Abel, Aisthorpe, Astbury, Batson, Beasant, Brasted, Brookes, Cairns, Callison, Cracknell, Croft, Dawkins, Furneaux, Goodwin, Green, Harness, Hogan, Jackson, Lindley, Mickleburgh, Parkinson, Patrick, Pettigrew, Procter, Reynolds, Rudd, Sandford, Shepherd, Sheridan, Shreeve, Silvester, Smith, K.Swinburn, S.Swinburn, Westcott, Wilson and Woodward

Officers in Attendance:

- Rob Walsh (Chief Executive)
- Eve Richardson-Smith (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
- Sharon Wroot (Executive Director for Environment, Economy and Resources)
- Paul Windley (Democratic and Scrutiny Team Manager)

The proceedings were opened with prayers by Reverend Mary Vickers.

NEL.12 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor provided an update on recent engagements including the opening of the Garth Lane footbridge and the Festival of the Sea. He informed Council of the sky dive that he was undertaking on 31st August in aid of his Mayoral Charities, as well as the Civic Sunday planned for 8th August and a Mayoral Charity Night scheduled for 30th October.

The Mayor moved the suspension of Standing Order 19.1 for this particular meeting to allow Members to remain seated when speaking. This was seconded by Councillor Beasant and agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED - That the Council's Standing Order 19.1 be suspended for this particular meeting to permit Members to remain seating when speaking.

The Mayor invited the Deputy Monitoring Officer to advise on protocols to be followed at this meeting.

NEL.13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from this meeting were received from Councillors Freeston, Hudson, Robinson and Rodwell.

NEL.14 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of North East Lincolnshire Council held on 18th March 2021 and the Annual Meeting of North East Lincolnshire Council held on 27th May 2021 were approved as a correct record.

NEL.15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Shepherd declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in item NEL.18 as the applicant for a planning application referred to in a question on notice.

NEL.16 QUESTION TIME

There were four questions submitted by members of the public for this meeting, in accordance with the Council's procedures.

The first question was submitted by Mr. Gregory-Mogg to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport. Mr Gregory-Mogg attended the meeting and put the question, as set out below:

Having recently used your online service for reporting speed and vehicle noise nuisance adjacent to my home your contractors Engie replied to quote incomplete and outdated speed data from 2019 and police collision statistics as the basis to dismiss any action to investigate enforcement. Yet, in a visit to my home Councillor Janet Goodwin, in the months just prior to the implementation of the 20mph speed reduction measures put in place in 2020, quoted entirely different speed and collision data of 4000 daily vehicles using Littlefield Lane and around 3 collisions as the basis for imposing the 20mph limit. Both can't be right! My husband and I witness, on a daily basis, many cars exceeding 30mph (not the 20) by as much as an estimated 50mph, some with modified noisy exhausts and motorcyclists performing wheelies down the road without crash helmets or registration plates. Your Engie representative responding to speed concerns on the Council's behalf made it clear the speed enforcement action would only be scheduled based on collision data (which he says has been zero over 5 years). Is the Councils position and message to speeding and lawless motorists, therefore, that speeding will only be enforced if they cause a collision, otherwise you can exceed posted limits with impunity regardless of noise, illegality or nuisance you cause to law abiding local tax-payers?

Councillor S Swinburn, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport, responded that traffic calming measures in Littlefield Lane had been introduced in

January 2020 following concerns about the existing chicanes, which data had shown to be ineffective. Further speed data was due to be carried out this year to check whether speed reductions had been sustained. Councillor Swinburn had informed relevant officers of the concerns raised by Mr Gregory-Mogg and asked them to make contact. Based on the data currently available, there did not appear to be much more that could be done from a highways perspective but the anti-social behaviour aspects would be pursued.

The second question was from Mrs Downes for the Leader of the Council. Mrs Downes attended the meeting and put the question as set out below.

The proposed Grimsby West Urban Extension of 3,800 new houses and Grimsby Western Relief Road will have a massive impact on local residents, traffic levels and local services. There is widespread opposition to these plans from local people who were never properly engaged when these plans were drawn up several years ago. This council states frequently that it is a 'listening council'. Can the Council Leader state when a formal consultation with local people will commence and what form it will take?

Councillor Jackson, Leader of the Council, welcomed the public interest and interaction in this potential future development. By its very nature such developments were always contentious and there were many factors to consider. It was only by consulting that we can try to reach a consensus. He noted that the Grimsby West site was allocated for circa 3,500 homes plus supporting infrastructure, not 3,800. He added that the Local Plan was consulted on extensively during its 5 years of preparation, consultation opportunities were well-publicised and met the legislative requirements, assessed and accepted by the inspector at examination of the Local Plan. Consultation included a well-publicised media campaign; online consultation options; emails and letters to residents, stakeholders and statutory bodies; along with various public consultation events that were hosted at the council's offices, local libraries, and local events at Laceby, Immingham, Grimsby and Cleethorpes. All consultations included information on the Grimsby West Urban Extension proposals and it was important to highlight that these consultation opportunities were well-publicised and met the legislative requirements, assessed and accepted by the inspector at examination. There was also the opportunity for members of the public to speak at the inspector's public examination of the Local Plan. The Local Plan was subsequently considered in detail and adopted unanimously by full Council in March 2018. Many of those who voted in favour formed part of the full Council meeting this evening, including the Leaders of the three main political parties on the Council. The next steps on this journey for the Grimsby West development were now being taken with a revised master plan being drawn up by the private sector housing developers. Meanwhile, the road was the subject of a Central Government Levelling Up Funding bid. We will hear about the success, or otherwise, of the bid in the Autumn and it is only if that was successful that a detailed business case for the road would be required at that stage. Future consultation (if the scheme goes ahead at this time) will have two stages. First will be consultation on a masterplan for the proposed site. This would shape the high-level layout of proposals for both the development site and the road and would offer the public an opportunity to have their say. Second would be consultation on

planning applications, which consider the finer detail of layout and construction. Members of the public would be invited to submit comments. Every aspect of the development would have to go through the full planning process and would be open and transparent. Both Natural England and the Environment Agency would be statutory consultees as part of that process. Both organisations were quite rightly very demanding when it came to putting in place proper environmental and ecological protections and had the power to ultimately block planning applications.

The third question was submitted by Mrs Downes to the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets as follows:

The proposed Grimsby West Urban Extension of 3,800 new houses will generate income for NELC whose finances seem to be perilous state, a key factor of which is Central Funding Grants being cut year on year. Can he state as part of the financial planning for the near future the best estimate of 'New Homes Bonus' that the development will generate from the Government in total, and likely annual council tax receipts thereafter?

Councillor Shreeve, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets responded by challenging the assertion that the council's finances were in a perilous state, noting that whilst the COVID pandemic had presented many challenges, the authority had posted a balanced result for 2021 and our external borrowings remained well within prudential limits. Referring to the comments about the potential Grimsby West development, even at this early stage all public scrutiny was welcomed. There would be further opportunities for consultation and discussion going forward as the Leader had alluded to in the response to the previous question. Grimsby West was one of three major sites in the Local Plan and was allocated for circa 3,500 homes plus supporting infrastructure. The development would be built out over a number of years should it go ahead and, to some extent, this would be part of the normal churn for the borough's housing stocks. Once fully developed, the development could generate up to £5.9M of additional council tax for the council on an annual basis but it was extremely unlikely that this would be incremental, as other properties fell out of use. This estimate was based upon 3,500 homes at an average Band D valuation. Income raised would be reinvested into key services such as waste collection, highways, the environment and social care. The financial implications would be built into the Council's medium term financial plan at the appropriate point. The New Homes Bonus scheme was currently being reviewed by the Government and would not exist in its current form. For that reason, our current Medium Term Financial Plan only included a modest sum for 2021/22 of £60k and did not include any income through 2022 to 2024, as it was not possible to estimate how much the development would generate under any new scheme.

The final question was submitted by Mrs Parker to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport. Mrs Parker attended the meeting and put the question as set out below.

North East Lincolnshire Council has applied for £50m of government funding to build a new road through the Freshney Valley and build 3,800 new houses. This

has been done without any environmental impact assessment (EIA) taking place and therefore no understanding of the potential effect on our precious local environment which is already being rapidly eroded by development across North East Lincolnshire. It would surely have made more logical sense to apply for funding to conduct an EIA prior to pushing ahead for this development at full speed. Can the Portfolio Holder for Environment assure local residents that this is not being pushed through as a 'fait accompli' which has already been decided in advance?

Councillor S Swinburn, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport responded by providing an assurance that this was not being pushed through as a 'fait accompli'. It was actually well publicised that this scheme was in its infancy and would be dependent on whether the bid was successful with central Government. He reiterated that the Grimsby west site was allocated for circa 3,500 homes plus supporting infrastructure, rather than 3,800 as the question stated. He added that the full bid for funding was for a total of £50m but approximately £14m of this was for other schemes, including improvements to the A180, cycle infrastructure and the Europarc bus bridge. A Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment was carried out at each stage of preparing the Local Plan. These two legal requirements were met through one integrated process, set out in a report prepared called the Sustainability Appraisal. This process considered the principle of the allocation of land. The road bid did not require an EIA at this stage. To do so before it was required would be inefficient and take unnecessary resource. If, and only if, the bid was successful would that form part of a full business case and it would be a requirement of the planning application process, when the detail of the proposed development was considered. No development would take place on site (housing or road) until necessary planning consents had been secured. The planning process is a stringent and transparent process that required a statutory procedure to be followed at all times.

NEL.17 THE LEADER'S STATEMENT

The Council received a statement from the Leader of the Council.

The Leader commented that a lot had happened since his last Leader's Statement back in March, not least the local elections and a subsequent by-election triggered by the resignation of a Labour member. The Conservative Group had gained a total of nine seats. The elections were fought on a manifesto that built on the previous one from 2019. On the doorstep, it was clear that people supported what the administration had been doing during its first two years and the pledges made. They would continue to work hard to meet their manifesto commitments and bring about the required improvements across the borough.

COVID continued to have a major impact, both nationally and locally, especially with the spread of the Delta variant. The Leader commented that recovery from the pandemic would not be a quick fix. The analysis done thus far confirmed that the health inequality gap across the Borough remained a significant challenge. He felt that this administration's approach to regeneration, growth, skills, housing and tourism was central to supporting a strong recovery for the benefit of local

people, local communities and local businesses. He paid tribute to everyone across the NHS, primary care, the council and volunteers in delivering the vaccination programme, with a very high local take-up. He also commended the council's workforce for their continued tremendous efforts in maintaining key public services in particularly challenging circumstances.

The Leader referred to the Government's Levelling Up White Paper due to be published in the Autumn, which would set out its approach to devolution and investment in the future growth of the 70% of the country that did not yet operate under any form of devolution. This would include proposals for so called "County Deals", which the administration would be interested in exploring in the context of its drive to increase partnership and collaboration on a Greater Lincolnshire footprint. In parallel, the importance of the Humber and its economic significance would remain a continued focus. This council's Freeport Accountable Body status was a clear example of its commitment to the Humber, as well as the drive to maximise the huge strategic growth opportunity that was the green decarbonisation agenda. The freeport project promised to catalyse significant new investment, business and jobs around the Humber, including in the Ports of Grimsby and Immingham and surrounding employment zones. Indeed, the bid included a £15 million element for seed capital projects to help unlock the benefits of inward investment across the Stallingborough Enterprise Zones.

The Leader reported that enquiries from industry and businesses interested in our employment zones around Grimsby, Stallingborough and Immingham remained buoyant. Recent high-profile announcements included a huge new cold store facility planned for Europarc and Myenergi were about to open their new headquarters on Pioneer Business Park. The offshore wind sector continued its inexorable growth, with increasing numbers of wind turbines operated and maintained from the port of Grimsby.

The Leader further commented on the Levelling Up Fund bid for strategic transport schemes, including the Grimsby West Relief Road that had been the subject of public questions earlier in the meeting.

The Leader referred to continued improvements in Grimsby town centre, including the refurbished St James Square which had recently hosted its first major public event – the inaugural Festival of the Sea. He thanked all those involved in organising this event, which showcased Grimsby's maritime heritage and our seafood sector. The Leader commented on the new, attractive bridge at Garth Lane which would improve connectivity in the town centre. Following submission of revised plans, the government had confirmed the awarding of £17.3 million of Future High Streets Funding for the exciting redevelopment and repurposing of the western end of Freshney Place, in partnership with the shopping centre's owners. An external professional delivery team was now being procured to provide the expertise and capacity to enable the project to be delivered as quickly and cost-effectively as possible. Cabinet had also agreed the allocation of the £21 million of Towns Fund grant monies between six outline town centre projects. The next stage was the preparation of the associated full business cases, which must be finalised by March next year.

The Leader was pleased that funding had finally been secured from the government and Network Rail for a new bridge over the railway line at Suggitt's Lane in Cleethorpes. The scheme was approved by the Planning Committee a couple of months ago and work had now started with completion expected by the end of the year.

On health and care, the council was being acknowledged regionally and beyond as leading the way with our health and care partners in responding to the Government's White Paper on integrated care, building on the strong track record of local government and NHS partnership working in North East Lincolnshire. Cabinet recently approved a comprehensive proposition and model that, if fully implemented, would see the Council effectively hosting our health and care system. This was vitally important particularly in the context of COVID recovery and, with our partners, tackling the wider determinants of health over the medium and longer term.

The Leader concluded by noting that details of special urgency decisions taken in accordance with the Constitution as well as an update on the implementation of Motions previously resolved at preceding Council meetings, had been circulated to all Members by Democratic Services.

NEL.18 BUSINESS REMAINING FROM THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING

The Council received the minutes of decisions taken under delegated powers at the following meetings:

- Cabinet - 13th January, 20th January, 10th February and 17th February
- Portfolio Holder Environment and Transport - 11th January
- Portfolio Holder Finance and Resources - 14th December
- Portfolio Holder Safer and Stronger Communities - 18th February
- Shared Services Joint Committee - 18th December
- Budget Scrutiny - 25th January and 26th January
- Scrutiny Panel Children and Lifelong Learning - 19th November, 28th January and 16th February
- Scrutiny Panel Communities - 26th November and 4th February
- Scrutiny Panel Economy - 1st December and 12th January
- Scrutiny Panel Health and Adult Social Care - 20th January
- Scrutiny Panel Tourism and Visitor Economy - 3rd December and 11th February
- Place Board (operating as the Health and Wellbeing Board) - 30th November, 18th January and 22nd February
- Audit and Governance Committee - 21st January
- Planning Committee - 2nd December, 6th January and 3rd February
- Licensing Sub Committee - 7th January and 19th January
- Standards and Adjudication Committee - 16th December
- Standards Referrals Panel - 17th December
- Appointments Committee - 7th December, 16th December and 11th January

The Mayor advised that a number of questions on notice had been received on the above minutes. They would be dealt with in the order in which they had been received; each questioner would be permitted one supplementary question and there would be no debate on the questions asked or the answers given.

- (1) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Patrick to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Skills in accordance with the Council's Constitution as follows:

Cabinet – 13th January Minute CB.83 (Family Hub Review)

“The decision to close half of our family hub service without any pre consultation with service users was a stitch up wasn't it?”

Councillor Lindley, Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Skills responded that he would hardly call it a stitch up and he reminded Members that this matter was currently the subject of a consultation and the outcome of this would be reported to scrutiny.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Patrick enquired whether the portfolio holder was aware that the decision had been taken before any consultation with service users had taken place.

Councillor Lindley repeated that the matter was subject to consultation and this would be referred to scrutiny once the consultation had closed.

- (2) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Patrick to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Skills in accordance with the Council's Constitution as follows:

Cabinet – 13th January Minute CB.83 (Family Hub Review)

“What expanded role was considered for the buildings set to close within the family hub offer, what proposals were worked up and why were they ruled out?”

Councillor Lindley, Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Skills responded that most of the family hubs were attached to schools and as part of the lease agreement signed when they became academies, they had the right to use the buildings in the manner intended. Therefore, and given the significant shortfall in school places, he expected to see them put back into educational use.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Patrick referred to the number of families that were in a desperate situation as a result of COVID outbreaks and enquired why the use of these buildings was not even considered.

Councillor Lindley responded that the four family hubs that remained open during the COVID period had worked very well during a very challenging time. He felt that questioning their efficiency was wrong as they had coped admirably.

- (3) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Patrick to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Skills in accordance with the Council's Constitution as follows:

Cabinet – 13th January Minute CB.83 (Family Hub Review)

“When Councillor Lindley served as Portfolio holder for children’s services some ten years ago, he had a deep passion for protecting the family hubs, after this act of social vandalism, can he tell us, when and why did he change his mind?”

Councillor Lindley, Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Skills responded that he had not changed his mind and remained passionate about children’s services. He referred to the previous Labour administration’s decision to take £1m out of youth services so he refused to be lectured on such a point.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Patrick noted that Councillor Lindley was a member of the Labour Group at the time and did he now regret that decision.

Councillor Lindley responded that he wasn’t proud of the decision which came at the end of his tenure as portfolio holder and could have been reversed but the Labour Group chose not to.

- (4) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Patrick to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport in accordance with the Council's Constitution as follows:

Cabinet – 13th January Minute CB.85 (Fleet Replacement Capital for 2021 – 2022)

“Could the portfolio holder could provide a breakdown of the vehicles to be purchased in this decision and the costs therein?”

Councillor S. Swinburn, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport responded that the purchase would allow the council to meet statutory services in areas such as waste, street cleansing, education and highways. The council had a corporate responsibility to ensure that all vehicles comply with required standards and a plan had been developed to provide the most cost and time effective method to meet future demand. The estimated spend for 2021/22 was £3.75m, including £1.28m deferred from the previous year for waste vehicles that had yet to be replaced.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Patrick asked for a rundown of the council’s ambitions with regard to the green credentials of the new vehicles to be purchased.

Councillor Swinburn responded that he was happy with the process devised by the Highways team.

- (5) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Patrick to the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets in accordance with the Council's Constitution as follows:

Cabinet – 20th January Minute CB.92 (Draft Finance and Commissioning Plan 2021/2022 – 2023/24 – Post Local Government Financial Settlement)

“Does the portfolio holder consider the financial settlement debated in this minute fair and why?”

Councillor Shreeve, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets, responded that the council had received a single year settlement from the government, although he would have preferred a longer settlement. He noted that Councillor Patrick had attended the scrutiny workshop to discuss the detail and he had taken part in the full debate at full Council when the budget was agreed. Therefore, he was no doubt aware of the funding pressures arising from the COVID pandemic in particular. In the circumstances, the administration was satisfied that it could avoid exceeding the permitted limits for council tax rises, despite the obvious pressures.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Patrick enquired why the portfolio holder had not been more vocal to central government to get a better deal for North East Lincolnshire.

Councillor Shreeve responded that the administration was committed to the population of North East Lincolnshire.

- (6) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Patrick to the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets in accordance with the Council's Constitution as follows:

Cabinet – 20th January Minute CB.92 (Draft Finance and Commissioning Plan 2021/2022 – 2023/24 – Post Local Government Financial Settlement)

“Given the maximum increases in council tax that were proposed and later agreed, can the portfolio holder remind us if there was any mention of tax in the 2019 Conservative manifesto and if so, what the paragraph relating said?”

Councillor Shreeve, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets responded that the first sentence of the manifesto referred to the Conservatives being better at managing your money and he believed that this was understood by the electorate.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Patrick asked the portfolio holder if he was aware that the Conservatives had a commitment to being a low taxation party and that this administration had continued to raise Council Tax to the maximum permissible without needing to hold a local referendum, what did this say to the electorate.

Councillor Shreeve responded that it was a matter of regret that council tax increases had been imposed but it was not the intention to do so forever and it was the intention to revert as soon as possible to the low taxation policy.

- (7) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Patrick to the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets in accordance with the Council's Constitution as follows:

Cabinet – 10th February Minute CB.100 (Treasury Management Policy and Strategy 2021/22)

“Could the portfolio holder give the chamber an overview of the council's investments and strategy therein?”

Councillor Shreeve, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets responded that the primary objective continued to be the security of capital. Liquidity or accessibility of the council's investments, followed by yield on investments, remained important but were a secondary consideration.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Patrick asked if the portfolio holder could provide examples of where investments would be made in the future.

Councillor Shreeve responded that he was happy to take the advice of the treasury team on that subject, who were the experts in this field. He agreed to provide a written response with specific examples.

- (8) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Patrick to the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets in accordance with the Council's Constitution as follows:

Cabinet – 10th February Minute CB.100 (Treasury Management Policy and Strategy 2021/22)

“Can the Portfolio holder for finance offer a figure as to the total sum of borrowing the council will be expected to borrow within current plans?”

Councillor Shreeve, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets noted that the administration had inherited £127.3m of debt, which was projected to increase in 2021 to £167m. The administration had been able to mitigate this since coming into office and reduced this figure to £149m. Peak borrowing was expected to be around £180m, which was £100m below the maximum allowed under prudential limits.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Patrick enquired whether the portfolio holder felt that this level of borrowing had the support of the population of North East Lincolnshire.

Councillor Shreeve repeated that the administration had inherited a high level of debt and he was not convinced that this had been spent in the best interests of residents. The money borrowed since had been subject to far more rigorous

scrutiny and he was confident that the borrowing contained within the medium term plan would be repaid in a timely manner, bringing financial benefit to the whole of the community.

- (9) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Patrick to the Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities in accordance with the Council's Constitution as follows:

Cabinet – 10th February Minute CB.103 (North East Lincolnshire Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Strategy)

“Does the portfolio holder condemn the recent slashing of funding to ASB prevention in the recent budget, that will make the objectives of ASB partnerships like this harder to achieve?”

Councillor Shepherd, Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities responded that he would not and referred to the minutes of the Communities Scrutiny Panel meeting held in November, 2020 which showed that there had been an increase in staffing numbers.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Patrick asked why he was welcoming a reduction in his own budgets.

Councillor Shepherd that there had been a reorganisation following a review of the service and this had resulted in an increase to staffing numbers, achieving the aims of the administration.

- (10) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Patrick to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport in accordance with the Council's Constitution as follows:

Cabinet – 10th February Minute CB.106 (Review and Update of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan)

“Could the portfolio holder explain the rights of way improvement plan and does this plan factor the policies of the ramblers charity?”

Councillor S Swinburn, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport responded that the public rights of way were available on the council's website. He provided an assurance that the plan met all the council's requirements and would benefit the Ramblers Association, other user groups and members of the public. He added that the ramblers were consulted on all proposals in relation to public rights of way.

- (11) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Patrick to the Leader of the Council in accordance with the Council's Constitution as follows:

Cabinet – 17th February Minute CB.111 (Future High Streets Fund)

“Could the Leader please explain why our bid was not fully successful, and example authorities that were successful in their full bid and why they succeeded where we did not?”

Councillor Jackson, Leader of the Council responded that the council's bid had been ranked 9th highest out of the 72 places that had been awarded funding. Only two places had received their full allocation. Enquiries had been made as to the reasons for this but no explanation had been received.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Patrick asked whether the Leader was aware that this council had moved from being the best example of being a flagship for town centre regeneration to one that no longer had the confidence of the government.

Councillor Jackson did not accept that and commented that the government still had significant confidence in this council.

(12) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Patrick to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Skills in accordance with the Council's Constitution as follows:

Cabinet – 17th February Minute CB.112 (Schools Capital Programme)

“Could the portfolio holder please identify key projects in this programme, the benefits they will bring and evidence value for money in each project?”

Councillor Lindley, Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Skills noted the importance of this funding programme and one of the first priorities identified was to support a basic needs scheme at Beacon Academy to create 170 additional places. He felt that this scheme demonstrated good value for money.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Patrick enquired what evidence was available to demonstrate such good value for money.

Councillor Lindley responded that the authority had a statutory responsibility to provide significant and suitable provision on school places and failure to do so would mean that these duties would not be met.

(13) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Patrick to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport in accordance with the Council's Constitution as follows:

Portfolio Holder Environment and Transport – 11th January Minute PH.ETE.25 (Tracking Report)

“Could the Portfolio Holder update Members on the issues listed on the tracking report?”

Councillor S Swinburn, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport responded that each item showed an update and outstanding matters were then updated at following meetings until such time as they had been resolved.

- (14) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Patrick to the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets in accordance with the Council's Constitution as follows:

Portfolio Holder Finance and Resources – 14th December Minute PH.FR.2
(Review of Fees and Charges for Registrars and Civic Services)

“Could the portfolio holder give us examples of the current fees for these services with our immediate neighbours and what reassurance from that information is there that we are competitive?”

Councillor Shreeve, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets responded that the council had participated in a benchmarking exercise with registrars in the Yorkshire and Humber region. He noted that fees had been agreed up to and including 2023/24 due to the long planning times for events such as weddings. He did not have the report to hand but agreed to send this to Councillor Patrick.

- (15) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Patrick to the Chair of the Children and Lifelong Scrutiny Panel in accordance with the Council's Constitution as follows:

Children and Lifelong Scrutiny Panel – 19th November Minute SPCLL.31
(Educational Attainment in North East Lincolnshire 2019)

“Given the catastrophic impact COVID has doubtlessly had on education attainment in our area, what action does the Chair believe that the portfolio holder should take to combat this dreadful state of affairs effectively?”

In the absence of the panel Chair, Councillor Woodward, Deputy Chair of Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel responded that the impact of COVID had been devastating in many aspects, not just education, and the full impact had yet to be identified. Attainment had been low for many years in the Borough. She noted that the impact of COVID on attainment was not isolated to North East Lincolnshire and her recommendation would be to see what national guidance was issued and to then work closely with the local educational establishments to implement the guidance. In the meantime, she felt that there needed to be continued lobbying and she added that the administration had committed to address this issue and would do so.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Patrick enquired whether this matter should be brought back to the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel for a report by the portfolio holder.

Councillor Woodward felt that as this was a priority for the whole Borough then it should.

- (16) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Patrick to the Chair of the Children and Lifelong Scrutiny Panel in accordance with the Council's Constitution as follows:

Children and Lifelong Scrutiny Panel – 28th January Minute SPCLL.46 (North East Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Report)

"What does the Chair consider to be the key principles of safeguarding vulnerable children and how do we measure beyond doubt that we are achieving this?"

In the absence of the panel Chair, Councillor Woodward, Deputy Chair of Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel outlined the NSPCC key safeguarding principles, which North East Lincolnshire Council adhered to. She was confident that there were now robust and effective partnerships in place, containing key professionals, to scrutinise key aspects of children and young people's provision.

- (17) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Patrick to the Chair of the Children and Lifelong Scrutiny Panel in accordance with the Council's Constitution as follows:

Children and Lifelong Scrutiny Panel – 16th February Minute SPCLL.53 (Call-in Family Hub Review)

"Is the Chair aware that by not bringing this issue to scrutiny pre decision, the scrutiny process clearly failed, as did yourself as Chair to some of the most vulnerable residents in the borough?"

In the absence of the panel Chair, Councillor Woodward, Deputy Chair of Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel did not feel that the accusation made was correct. The proposal was to close underutilised hubs and look to provide services from alternative venues in specific areas. There was no suggestion of stopping much needed services. Consultation was still ongoing and therefore there was still the opportunity to comment on the proposals before the matter was considered further by scrutiny.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Patrick enquired whether this was actually a proposal or a resolution.

Councillor Woodward understood that it was a proposal at this stage.

- (18) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Patrick to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport in accordance with the Council's Constitution as follows:

Communities Scrutiny Panel – 26th November Minute SPC.41 (Waste and Recycling Strategy)

“Could the Portfolio holder tell us how many recycling bins were refused collection since the new recycling system was introduced?”

Councillor S Swinburn, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport responded that 659 recycling bins had been refused collection.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Patrick noted the portfolio holder’s previous claim that there had been no increase in contamination and given this figure could he clarify that he was incorrect in this assumption.

Councillor Swinburn responded that he had given the figure and therefore felt he had answered the question.

(19) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Patrick to the Chair of the Communities Scrutiny Panel in accordance with the Council’s Constitution as follows:

Communities Scrutiny Panel – 4th February Minute SPC.58 (Community Recycling Centre and Bring to Site)

“Is the Chair aware that the flippant decision to remove half of all bring to sites in the borough was just more evidence that this administration has no understanding or care for many residents that live in smaller properties?”

Councillor Silvester, Chair of the Communities Scrutiny Panel responded that this was a briefing paper that had been presented to the panel and no decision had been taken by Cabinet yet.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Patrick enquired whether the Chair still felt this to be the right decision given the recent surge in fly tipping.

Councillor Silvester was confident that decisions would be based on evidence.

(20) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Patrick to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport in accordance with the Council’s Constitution as follows:

Economy Scrutiny Panel – 1st December Minute SPE.55 (Europarc Bus Service)

“Is the portfolio holder aware that the threat to remove the Europarc bus subsidy without an alternative in place is just another example of him trying to chest beat his way out of a problem that he lacks the imagination to find a solution to?”

Councillor S Swinburn, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport felt that the question was insulting and not correct. Every opportunity was being pursued to provide the bus service beyond March 2022. The present subsidy had been extended to March 2022 and discussions continued with Stagecoach. A Levelling Up Fund bid had been put forward which included the Europarc bus route and if this was successful then it would be factored into further discussions.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Patrick enquired what would happen to the bus service if by March 2022 and none of the opportunities had been successful.

Councillor Swinburn responded that other options would be looked at.

(21) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Patrick to the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets in accordance with the Council's Constitution as follows:

Economy Scrutiny Panel – 1st December Minute SPE.58 (Future Delivery of the Regeneration Partnership)

“What alternatives to a contract extension were examined in great detail to make sure that the decision to place more taxpayers money into the pockets of Engie shareholders was sound?”

Councillor Shreeve, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets, questioned the mindset of automatically assuming that income from the partnership would go into shareholders pockets as he felt that Engie provided valuable services. He referred to the Cabinet Working Group that was established to review the partnership and included Councillor Patrick as a member. The Working Group considered organisational culture, budget savings, commercial sensitivities, contract management, decision-making structures, improving partnership relationships, access to information, financial concerns, improving attitudes, and services being brought back in house in some cases.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Patrick enquired whether the portfolio holder could provide him, outside of this meeting, with written details of alternative options that were considered, including business cases and confirmation of why those options were ruled out.

Councillor Shreeve felt that this went beyond what was contained in the minutes and he was satisfied that the procedures used to review the partnership were appropriate and right for this council.

(22) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Patrick to the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Housing and Tourism in accordance with the Council's Constitution as follows:

Tourism and Visitor Economy Scrutiny Panel – 11th February Minute SPTVE.48 (Cleethorpes Habitat Management Plan Update)

“The previous portfolio holder once claimed he was willing to dig up some of this habitat and risk a prison sentence in the process, was he right to say such things?”

Councillor Procter, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Housing and Tourism responded that this matter was being taken extremely seriously and there were ongoing discussions about mitigating and protecting the previously

agreed demarcation line for encroachment of the saltmarsh. Negotiations continued with Nature England about how to protect the beach.

Note – Councillor Shepherd left the meeting at this point having previously declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in the following questions.

(23) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Patrick to the Chair of the Planning Committee in accordance with the Council’s Constitution as follows:

Planning Committee – 6th January Minute P.59 Item 6 (Deposited Plans and Applications)

“Could the Chair explain the recommendation from officers on this application?”

Councillor Harness, Chair of the Planning Committee, responded that the application was recommended for refusal by the planning officer and he quoted the reasons given.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Patrick enquired whether the Chair was aware that the applicant was a Conservative councillor.

Councillor Harness responded that everyone knew that the applicant was a Conservative councillor and appropriate declarations of interest were made at the meeting. He added that his decision-making was not compromised by that fact and he spent considerable time considering the application, as he did with all other applications.

(24) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Patrick to the Chair of the Planning Committee in accordance with the Council’s Constitution as follows:

Planning Committee – 6th January Minute P.59 Item 6 (Deposited Plans and Applications)

“Is it disappointing that this as so many other developments like this come to planning already in place and without the required planning permission, running the risk of enforcement?”

Councillor Harness, Chair of the Planning Committee, responded that it was not uncommon to receive such applications but it was not ideal.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Patrick enquired how the Chair felt when a portfolio holder ran the risk of enforcement action arising from this application.

Councillor Harness responded that he was not aware of any enforcement issues relating to this application.

Note – Councillor Shepherd returned to the meeting at this point.

At the conclusion of the questions, the minutes of the meetings were moved en bloc by Councillor Jackson, seconded by Councillor Shreeve.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the minutes of the following meetings of Cabinet and the Committees of the Council be approved and adopted, as submitted:
 - Cabinet - 13th January, 20th January, 10th February and 17th February, 2021
 - Portfolio Holder Environment and Transport - 11th January 2021
 - Portfolio Holder Finance and Resources - 14th December 2020
 - Portfolio Holder Safer and Stronger Communities - 18th February 2021
 - Shared Services Joint Committee - 18th December 2020
 - Budget Scrutiny - 25th January and 26th January 2021
 - Scrutiny Panel Children and Lifelong Learning - 19th November 2020, 28th January and 16th February 2021
 - Scrutiny Panel Communities - 26th November 2020 and 4th February 2021
 - Scrutiny Panel Economy - 1st December 2020 and 12th January 2021
 - Scrutiny Panel Health and Adult Social Care - 20th January 2021
 - Scrutiny Panel Tourism and Visitor Economy - 3rd December 2020 and 11th February 2021
 - Place Board (operating as the Health and Wellbeing Board) - 30th November 2020, 18th January and 22nd February 2021
 - Audit and Governance Committee - 21st January 2021
 - Planning Committee - 2nd December 2020, 6th January and 3rd February 2021
 - Licensing Sub Committee - 7th January and 19th January 2021
 - Standards and Adjudication Committee - 16th December 2020
 - Standards Referrals Panel - 17th December 2020
 - Appointments Committee - 7th December, 16th December 2020 and 11th January 2021
- (2) That Councillor Shreeve provide a written response to Councillor Patrick's supplementary question on future investments from minute CB.100 of the Cabinet meeting held on 10th February, 2021.
- (3) That, further to the question on the minutes of the Portfolio Holder Finance and Resources meeting held on 14th December, 2021, a copy of the report providing benchmarking information regarding the review of fees and charges for registrars and civic services be circulated to Councillor Patrick .

NEL.19 AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

The Council received a report detailing the activities of the Audit and Governance Committee during the Council year and setting out how it had discharged its responsibilities. This report was referred to Council by the Audit and Governance Committee at its meeting on 22nd April, 2021.

The Mayor welcomed the independent Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee, Mr. Tim Render, to the meeting and invited him to introduce his report. Standing Orders were suspended for this purpose.

Mr. Render thanked the Mayor and Members for an opportunity to present the annual report and commented that it was good to be back with everyone in person. When he reported to Council last year, he pointed out that it was precisely at difficult times such as those experienced over the past 16 months that the Council needed assurance that it was properly controlling what it did – and that was the bread and butter of the work of the Audit and Governance Committee. He reminded Members just how big a business the Council was and one that became more complex by the year. The committee is the council's eyes and ears, making sure that the rules it set were followed, that the council was protecting public assets, and had effective arrangements for managing resources and securing value for money. He was pleased to confirm that the committee could provide substantial assurance about those arrangements. That conclusion followed the work it had reviewed from internal and external audit, the specific exercises it had carried out in looking at treasury management, the council's accounts, and its work monitoring and reviewing the governance effectiveness of partnerships. An "assurance map" continued to be developed by the council's internal auditors, setting out all the different ways the council could be assured that it was operating as intended to secure its objectives.

The committee published its work programme in April 2020, to focus on emerging issues – not least the recovery phase of the Pandemic - as well as day to day business. The work programme was shared with scrutiny members, to ensure that our respective work was complementary and added to the effective functioning of the authority. The work programme for the current municipal year has now been published and shared widely too.

Following best practice in audit, the committee had again assessed itself against the standards of effectiveness expected for Audit Committees. The assessment was essentially that the committee was effective, but recognised that there were improvements still to be made. The main one being to make more of our stakeholders aware of what we do and why audit was important. To this end, a "popular" version of the annual report was being prepared for wide circulation within the Council and would reinforce the council's commitment to embedding risk management in all that it does.

Mr Render summarised the work undertaken by the committee, as set out in the report, and thanked officers for their support of the committee's work. He was, as ever, grateful to members of the Committee who continued to demonstrate enthusiasm in developing a more effective audit function; and tenacity in following through issues. He commended the report to Council.

RESOLVED – That the Audit and Governance Committee annual report for 2020/21 be approved.

NEL.20 AMENDMENTS TO PLACES ON COMMITTEES, PANELS AND OUTSIDE BODIES OF THE COUNCIL

The Council considered a report from the Monitoring Officer advising of proposed changes to places on Committees, Panels and Outside Bodies of the Council.

RESOLVED –

1. That Councillor Hogan be appointed as a full member of the Economy Scrutiny Panel and the Tourism and Visitor Economy Scrutiny Panel.
2. That Councillor Dawkins be appointed as this Council's representative on Age UK North East Lincolnshire.
3. That Councillor Astbury be appointed as an additional Council representative on the Fostering Panel.

NEL.21 BARNOLDBY LE BECK COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

The Council considered a report from the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources providing an update on the community governance review of Barnoldby Le Beck parish following the request from the Parish Council to increase the size of its membership from five to six parish councillors. The report set out the feedback received to the second consultation period and made a number of recommendations regarding completion of the community governance review.

RESOLVED –

1. That the responses received to the second consultation period, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report now submitted, be noted.
2. That in the interests of effective and convenient local government and having taken into consideration the representations received:
 - a. The number of parish councillors on Barnoldby Le Beck Parish Council be increased from five to six.
 - b. That the change take effect from the next parish council elections in May 2023 to coincide with the rest of the parish council elections in North East Lincolnshire.
 - c. That the parish council remain unwarded.
3. That the Assistant Director of Law, Governance and Assets be authorised to make a reorganisation of community governance order to implement the changes agreed by Council.

NEL.22 PARLIAMENTARY BOUNDARY REVIEW CONSULTATION

The Council considered a report on the national public consultation issued by the Boundary Commission for England on the future arrangements for Parliamentary

Constituencies across the country, including proposals to amend the Parliamentary Boundaries for the Great Grimsby and Cleethorpes Constituencies.

Councillor Jackson broadly supported the proposals and moved the following motion:

That this Council supports the Boundary Commission for England's proposed amendments to Parliamentary constituency boundaries as they affect North East Lincolnshire, i.e. the proposed new Great Grimsby and Cleethorpes Borough Constituency and the South Humber County Constituency, though we wish to see the latter renamed the Northern Lincolnshire County Constituency.

This was seconded by Councillor Shreeve and carried upon a show of hands.

RESOLVED - That this Council supports the Boundary Commission for England's proposed amendments to Parliamentary constituency boundaries as they affect North East Lincolnshire, i.e. the proposed new Great Grimsby and Cleethorpes Borough Constituency and the South Humber County Constituency, though we wish to see the latter renamed the Northern Lincolnshire County Constituency.

NEL.23 SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

The Mayor moved that the Council's Standing Orders governing the length of meetings be suspended to permit this meeting to continue beyond 10.00 p.m. This was seconded by Councillor Beasant. Upon a show of hands, the motion was carried and it was:

RESOLVED - That the Council's Standing Orders governing the length of meetings be suspended to permit this meeting to continue beyond 10.00 p.m.

NEL.24 NOTICE OF MOTION

The Council considered a Notice of Motion, proposed by Councillor Green and seconded by Councillor Patrick, submitted in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders as set out below:

The Government has proposed to charge our older residents aged 60 and over in North East Lincolnshire and the rest of the country by removing the exemption to pay for their medical prescriptions. The current cost of these is £9.35 per item. Previously, the value of keeping our older people healthy and well has been recognised and free prescriptions have started at age 60, recognising the impact and cost that those long term health problems will have on our economy; the age when longer term health issues can start. The current health of our residents has been impacted severely by COVID and so there will be huge ongoing issues for our residents.

Many residents in our area would be hit severely by these charges and given the current economic situation many may struggle to afford them. This will impact severely upon their long-term health exactly at a time when more support is needed to be provided.

This council calls upon our Leader, the Portfolio holder for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care as well as lobbying our local members of parliament to state unequivocally their opposition to any proposals to introduce prescription charges to those aged sixty and over, and wherever possible, speak and vote against such proposals now and in the future.

An amendment to the motion was proposed by Councillor Cracknell and seconded by Councillor Shreeve, submitted in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders as set out below:

"To replace the final paragraph of the notice of motion with the following:

Given that this is an open consultation this Council requests the matter be referred to the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel to formulate a suitable response to the consultation".

During the debate on the amendment, the validity of the amendment was questioned by Councillor Wilson and Councillor Patrick but the Deputy Monitoring Officer ruled that it was a valid amendment. Councillor Patrick asked for his objection to this ruling to be recorded in the minutes.

Note – during the debate on the amendment and having informed the Mayor, Councillor Mickleburgh left the meeting.

Following the debate, a recorded vote was held on the amendment in accordance with the requirements of the Council's Standing Orders. The votes cast were recorded as follows:

For the amendment

Councillors Abel, Astbury, Batson, Brasted, Brookes, Cairns, Callison, Cracknell, Croft, Dawkins, Furneaux, Harness, Hasthorpe, Hogan, Jackson, Lindley, Parkinson, Pettigrew, Procter, Reynolds, Sandford, Shepherd, Shreeve, Silvester, Smith, K Swinburn, S Swinburn, Westcott and Woodward (29 votes).

Against the amendment

Councillors Aisthorpe, Beasant, Goodwin, Green, Patrick, Rudd, Sheridan and Wilson (8 votes).

The amendment was declared carried and there followed a debate on the amended substantive motion. Following a debate, this was put to the vote. A recorded vote was held in accordance with the requirements of the Council's Standing Orders; the votes cast were recorded as follows:

For the Amended Substantive Motion

Councillors Abel, Aisthorpe, Astbury, Batson, Beasant, Brasted, Brookes, Cairns, Callison, Cracknell, Croft, Dawkins, Furneaux, Goodwin, Green, Harness,

Hasthorpe, Hogan, Jackson, Lindley, Parkinson, Patrick, Pettigrew, Procter, Reynolds, Rudd, Sandford, Shepherd, Sheridan, Shreeve, Silvester, Smith, K Swinburn, S Swinburn, Westcott, Wilson and Woodward (37 votes).

Against the Amended Substantive Motion

None.

RESOLVED – That the open consultation on the proposed change to prescription charges for those aged 60 or over, be referred to the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel to formulate a suitable response to the consultation.

NEL.25 QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The Chair invited Councillor Green to present the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities the question having been submitted on notice in accordance with Council's Standing Orders.

“Could the Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities please explain why there is currently no action from the council to reports of dog attacks which are happening regularly over Fuller Street Bridge. Residents are very concerned about this, particularly as there is legislation in place which clearly gives local authorities the powers to act on this.”

Councillor Shepherd, Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities responded that issues such as this would be treated as a crime under the Dangerous Dogs Act and therefore he could not comment any further on that aspect. He acknowledged that there was a gap with the Cleethorpes Sea Front Public Space Protection Order in that it did not deal with dog attacks. Therefore he had instigated a programme called Local and Environmental Awareness on Dogs. This would be brought forward to the Communities Scrutiny Panel for consideration in September 2021.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Green enquired what attempts had been made to liaise with the police or to issue notices.

Councillor Shepherd repeated that the matter was being treated as a crime. The Council's Anti-Social Behaviour team had also been involved but there remained a gap that needed to be addressed.

The Chair invited Councillor Patrick to present the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Health, Wellbeing and Adult and Social Care, the question having been submitted on notice in accordance with Council's Standing Orders.

“Why is North East Lincolnshire such a clear outlier for high civic rates compared with our geographical neighbours?”

Councillor Cracknell, Portfolio Holder for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care responded that the Covid rates had altered after the step 3 easing of restrictions and the movement of people in and out of North East Lincolnshire for work and

leisure from areas of higher Delta variant transmission. The Delta variant had become dominant in North East Lincolnshire and was highly transmissible in indoor settings, spreading rapidly in the young unvaccinated population who were socially active and possibly less compliant with guidance. There was low natural immunity as North East Lincolnshire had a much lower previous exposure to the virus than many other parts of the country, including other parts of the Humber. There had been clusters of household transmissions, infecting other household members and being taken into schools and workplaces. Food processing settings had been particularly affected. However, the area was not seeing the same levels of hospitalisation and illness because of the protective effect of the vaccination programme.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Patrick enquired what lessons had been learnt to prevent spikes in the future.

Councillor Cracknell felt that there was general agreement that the vaccination programme was the answer and we needed to find ways to encourage people to take up the vaccine.

The Chair invited Councillor Patrick to present the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Housing and Tourism, the question having been submitted on notice in accordance with Council's Standing Orders.

“Does the portfolio holder share my concerns that although we need our tourism industry to be successful, our extremely high rate of COVID makes us a hotspot of transmission to visitors?”

Councillor Procter, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Housing and Tourism responded that inevitably the very high rates of COVID that we have seen in the Borough over the last six weeks did translate into an increased risk of transmission to all people, residents and visitors, especially people using indoor spaces such as pubs and cafes. This is why there has been a continued focus on the importance of taking COVID prevention precautions such as maintaining social distance, using face coverings in indoor spaces and hand washing/sanitisation. Rates did now appear to be falling so the risk would reduce over a period of time. However, they were likely to remain relatively high compared to our long term experience of COVID for the remainder of the summer period so the COVID prevention advice was likely to remain in force for the rest of the summer period. He added that the ultimate line of defence was our fantastic vaccine roll out.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Patrick enquired whether the portfolio holder felt that the mechanisms put in place for visitors had been successful, given the high rates seen.

Councillor Procter took the opportunity to thank officers for the innovative ways in which they had dealt with the situation, such as wardens and signage. He felt that they had done a very good job in very difficult circumstances.

The Chair invited Councillor Patrick to present the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets the question having been submitted on notice in accordance with Council's Standing Orders.

“The Financial outturn report for last financial year reported yet again a massive overspend across the various sectors of council business, how was this multi million pound gap plugged?”

Councillor Shreeve, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets responded that the Council had achieved a provisional balanced outturn position. Service areas reported a £15.5M overspend after facing significant financial implications as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. A combination of additional costs, increased service demand, shortfalls against income targets and delays in the delivery of savings programmes had resulted in this position. Funding was received from Government in recognition of the pandemic, with £14.3M being utilised to address the costs of the pandemic in 2020/21 and this included compensation for income losses. This, in addition to underspends against borrowing costs and other budgets, had resulted in the forecast balanced position.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Patrick enquired whether the portfolio holder was aware that the council was entirely dependent on emergency COVID funding and it was unclear how deficits would be filled.

Councillor Shreeve responded that the council was required to make an assessment as to the robustness of estimates and adequacy of reserves within the financial plan. That assessment was completed and signed off by the Council's Section 151 officer, prior to the budget being approved by full Council. The assessment included an analysis of the risks underpinning the financial plan, and the council's ability to mitigate against those risks. The financial position was kept under regular review and scrutiny via our governance processes. The position was without doubt a challenging one, but the council was in no worse position than many of our peers.

NEL. 26 MINUTES OF THE CABINET AND COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL

The Council received the minutes of decisions taken under delegated powers at the following meetings:

- Cabinet - 10th March, 7th April, 1st June, 16th June and 23rd June
- Portfolio Holder Environment and Transport - 8th March, 12th April, 14th June
- Portfolio Holder Safer and Stronger Communities - 24th June
- Scrutiny Panel Children and Lifelong Learning - 25th March
- Scrutiny Panel Communities - 1st April
- Scrutiny Panel Economy - 9th February, 9th March
- Scrutiny Panel Health and Adult Social Care - 17th March
- Scrutiny Panel Tourism and Visitor Economy - 8th April
- Place Board (operating as the Health and Wellbeing Board) - 26th March

- Audit and Governance Committee - 22nd April, 24th June
- Planning Committee - 3rd March, 31st March, 28th April and 17th June
- Licensing and Community Protection Committee - 10th March and 22nd June
- Licensing Sub Committee - 1st April, 9th April, 13th April and 18th June
- Standards and Adjudication Committee - 14th April
- Standards Referrals Panel - 23rd April and 30th June
- Appeals Sub Committee - 16th April
- Appointments Committee - 12th April, 28th June

The Mayor advised that a number of questions on notice had been received on the above minutes. They would be dealt with in the order in which they had been received; each questioner would be permitted one supplementary question and there would be no debate on the questions asked or the answers given.

- (1) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Patrick to the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets in accordance with the Council's Constitution as follows:

Cabinet – 16th June Minute CB.10 (Gypsy and Traveller Designated Stopping Site)

“Your predecessor made it clear that this administration would find a designated stopover site in the borough by December 2019, how successful to date has this pledge been?”

Councillor Shreeve, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets responded that as a result of updated guidance and reduced numbers in this area, there was no current need for a formal site.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Patrick enquired whether there was an obvious risk that the reason for the reduction was due to the assessment being carried out during a pandemic.

Councillor Shreeve responded remarkably not.

- (2) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Patrick to the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets in accordance with the Council's Constitution as follows:

Cabinet – 16th June Minute CB.10 (Gypsy and Traveller Designated Stopping Site)

“Where does this decision leave a repeated point by the members of this administration that a designated site would lead to more police powers to deal with future illegal traveller encampments?”

Councillor Shreeve, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets responded that negotiated stopping should have some aspects of mutual agreement. Enforcement would continue at a pace and discussions with the

police would continue on that basis. He added that travellers were not above the law and must behave within the law.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Patrick enquired whether this was another example of the Conservatives talking tough in opposition and then “flip-flopping” in administration.

Councillor Shreeve responded that it was not.

- (3) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Patrick to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport in accordance with the Council’s Constitution as follows:

Portfolio Holder Environment and Transport – 8th March Minute PH.ETE.28 (Bereavement Services Fees and Charges)

“Is the portfolio holder aware just how out of touch and cruel a hiking of these charges are in such a sensitive area at a time of pandemic?”

Councillor S Swinburn, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport, responded that the increased charges was not a case of being out of touch. The fees and charges had not been reviewed in recent years and also due to the pandemic. It showed how sensitivity had been shown and he added that a benchmarking report had shown that the services continued to provide value for money.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Patrick enquired what message he would give to those residents who were now being pushed deeper into debt

Councillor Swinburn responded that he did not believe that this was pushing people into poverty.

- (4) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Patrick to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport in accordance with the Council’s Constitution as follows:

Scrutiny Panel Communities – 1st April Minute SPC.71 (Call In - Bereavement Services Fees and Charges)

“Can the portfolio holder evidence that this decision will not adversely impact the rate of funeral poverty in our area?”

Councillor S Swinburn, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport, responded that he was not aware of any evidence to show an adverse impact on funeral poverty in the area.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Patrick enquired why the portfolio holder felt comfortable taking the decision if there was no evidence.

Councillor Swinburn referred to his previous answer as the correct one.

- (5) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Rudd to the Chair of the Communities Scrutiny Panel in accordance with the Council's Constitution as follows:

Scrutiny Panel Communities – 1st April Minute SPC.72 (Public Space CCTV Strategy)

“In the minutes it is recorded, that the CCTV on Grant Thorold Park has been plagued by issues. Would the Chair seek an assurance from the Portfolio Holder that this camera will be replaced?”

Councillor Silvester, Chair of the Communities Scrutiny Panel, responded that he understood that if intelligence demonstrated a need then the camera would be replaced.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Rudd noted that the camera had been in place for a number of years and asked why it couldn't just be replaced.

Councillor Silvester responded that an operational working group looked at all cameras and, if it was needed, then it would be replaced.

- (6) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Patrick to the Deputy Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee in accordance with the Council's Constitution as follows:

Audit and Governance Committee – 22nd April Minute AC.8 (Treasury Management Outturn Report)

“The treasury management report proposes to borrow eye watering sums of money over the next few years, can the vice chair tell us, in his opinion, as a financial figure, how much debt he feels the authority should under no circumstances surpass?”

Councillor Harness, Deputy Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee, responded that the mid-term plan projected borrowing well within prudential limits. The committee continued to review treasury management policies on a regular basis.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Patrick enquired whether Councillor Harness was comfortable with the level of borrowing.

Councillor Harness was assured that the peak borrowing would be well within the upper limits and therefore he was comfortable with it.

- (7) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Patrick to the Deputy Chair of the Standards and Adjudication Committee in accordance with the Council's Constitution as follows:

Standards and Adjudication Committee – 14th April Minute SA.12 (Amendment to Council Standing Orders)

“Is the Chair aware that the proposal to remove questions without notice is a blatant attempt to create a fig leaf to cover up the fact that many committee chairs and portfolio holders understand little about the roles that they currently occupy?”

Councillor K Swinburn, Chair of the Standards and Adjudication Committee, responded that she was not aware of any cover up by any Chair or Portfolio Holder in not understanding their role.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Patrick enquired whether the Chair was confident that Committee Chairs and Portfolio Holders were well briefed on their role.

Councillor Swinburn responded that she was.

- (8) A question on notice was submitted by Councillor Patrick to the Deputy Chair of the Standards and Adjudication Committee in accordance with the Council's Constitution as follows:

Standards and Adjudication Committee – 14th April Minute SA.12 (Amendment to Council Standing Orders)

“What arguments did the chair feel convinced her to vote in favour of the suppression of questions without notice?”

Councillor K Swinburn, Chair of the Standards and Adjudication Committee, responded that she did not feel the need to explain or justify the way she voted.

At the conclusion of the questions, the minutes of the meetings were moved en bloc by Councillor Jackson, seconded by Councillor Shreeve.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the minutes of the following meetings of Cabinet and the Committees of the Council be approved and adopted, as submitted:
- Cabinet - 10th March, 7th April, 1st June, 16th June and 23rd June 2021
 - Portfolio Holder Environment and Transport - 8th March, 12th April, 14th June 2021
 - Portfolio Holder Safer and Stronger Communities - 24th June 2021
 - Scrutiny Panel Children and Lifelong Learning - 25th March 2021

- Scrutiny Panel Communities - 1st April 2021
- Scrutiny Panel Economy - 9th February, 9th March 2021
- Scrutiny Panel Health and Adult Social Care - 17th March 2021
- Scrutiny Panel Tourism and Visitor Economy - 8th April 2021
- Place Board (operating as the Health and Wellbeing Board) - 26th March 2021
- Audit and Governance Committee - 22nd April, 24th June 2021
- Planning Committee - 3rd March, 31st March, 28th April and 17th June 2021
- Licensing and Community Protection Committee - 10th March and 22nd June 2021
- Licensing Sub Committee - 1st April, 9th April, 13th April and 18th June 2021
- Standards and Adjudication Committee - 14th April 2021
- Standards Referrals Panel - 23rd April and 30th June 2021
- Appeals Sub Committee - 16th April 2021
- Appointments Committee - 12th April, 28th June 2021

There been no further business, the Mayor declared the meeting closed at 10.35 p.m.