



Council
16 May 2023

Borough Council Minutes

9 March 2023

Present: Councillors Hay (*in the Chair*), Atkinson, Bell, Berkley, Best, Brenen, Bristow, Carter, Dawes, P. Dean, S. Dean, Dixon, Donaldson, Ellison, Flynn, Foreman, Forster, Francis, Gibson, Guy, Herbert, Hetherington, Huntley, Keegan, Kilgour, Lamonte, K. Maxwell, N. Maxwell, McCabe, McHugh, McKeown, Meling, Milburn, Peacock, Porthouse, Potts, Proudlock, Roberts, Robertson, Stonehouse, Strike, Taylor, Thompson, Traynor, M. Walsh and Welsh

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Apologies: Councillors Amar, Clare, Duncan, Kennedy, Leask, Malcolm, Purvis, A Walsh

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The Chair reminded the public that the meeting was being recorded and live streamed.

Members were reminded of the Code of Conduct and Council Procedure Rules.

1. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Best declared a personal interest in item 6, Cost of Living Response Update as she had been involved in work carried out in relation to this matter. She remained in the meeting during the discussion and determination of the item.

Councillor Best declared a personal interest in motion 1 as part of the Save South Tyneside Hospital Campaign. She remained in the meeting during discussion and determination of the item.

Councillor Best declared a personal interest in motion 3 as she worked for the MP mentioned in the amended motion which was circulated at

the meeting. She remained in the meeting during discussion and determination of the item.

Councillor P Dean declared a personal interest in motion 4 as a member of the Joint Transport Committee. He remained in the meeting during discussion and determination of the item.

Councillor P Dean declared a personal interest in motion 1 as part of the Save South Tyneside Hospital Campaign. He remained in the meeting during discussion and determination of the item.

Councillor S Dean declared a personal interest in motion 1 as part of the Save South Tyneside Hospital Campaign. He remained in the meeting during discussion and determination of the item.

Councillor Francis declared a personal interest in motion 4 as a member of the Joint Transport Committee. He remained in the meeting during discussion and determination of the item.

Councillor Francis declared a personal interest in motion 1 as part of the Save South Tyneside Hospital Campaign. He remained in the meeting during discussion and determination of the item.

Councillor Gibson declared a personal interest in motion 4 as a member of the Joint Transport Committee. He remained in the meeting during discussion and determination of the item.

Councillor Herbert declared a personal interest in motion 1 as part of the Save South Tyneside Hospital Campaign and noted that his daughter worked for the NHS. He remained in the meeting during discussion and determination of the item.

Councillor McCabe declared a personal interest in motion 1 as part of the Save South Tyneside Hospital Campaign, and also it was noted that his wife worked for the NHS. He left the meeting during discussion and determination of the item.

Councillor McHugh declared a personal interest in motion 4 as a member of the Joint Transport Committee. She remained in the meeting during discussion and determination of the item.

Councillor Porthouse declared a personal interest in motion 1 as part of the Save South Tyneside Hospital Campaign. He remained in the meeting during discussion and determination of the item.

Councillor Stonehouse declared a personal interest in motion 1 as part of the Save South Tyneside Hospital Campaign. She remained in the meeting during discussion and determination of the item.

Councillor Strike declared a pecuniary interest in motion 1 as an NHS employee. She left the meeting during discussion and determination of the item.

Councillor M Walsh declared a pecuniary interest in motion 1 as an NHS employee. He left the meeting during discussion and determination of the item.

2. Minutes of the Meeting of Council 23 February 2023

Councillor Robertson queried why some Members were named in the minutes and not others and why it differed at other committee meetings. The Monitoring Officer explained that the minutes were not a verbatim record of the meeting, rather an overview of what occurred, and that Council was different as some names had to be included due to the questions asked and actions required.

Resolved: That the minutes of the Meeting of Borough Council held on 23 February 2023 be approved.

3. Mayor's Communications

The Mayor paid tribute to retiring Councillors Amar, Atkinson, Duncan and Flynn, thanking them for their service.

The Mayor reported that following a Motion presented to Council on 12 January 2023 Emma Lewell-Buck MP had sent the Council a copy of a WASPI Campaign letter which had been circulated to all Members. Kate Osborne MP had also raised the matter further with the Secretary of State for the Department of Work and Pensions.

4. South Tyneside Council Strategy Progress Update

Submitted: Report of the Chief Executive

Councillor Dixon, Leader of the Council, presented the report which provided an overview of updates and achievements in relation to the headline projects and activities set out in the South Tyneside Council Strategy 2023-2026.

The report provided details on the work carried out so far in relation to the five core ambitions:

- Financially secure - Residents will be financially secure. They will have what they need for a good standard of living.
 - Healthy and well - Residents will enjoy good mental wellbeing and physical health throughout their lives. They will have the best start in life and be able to live and age well.
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- Connected to jobs - Residents will have access to jobs, skills, and learning. They will have the skills and confidence to apply for a wide range of quality local jobs. These jobs will be in key and growing areas of employment and will benefit all of our borough
- Part of strong communities - Residents will live in clean, green, and connected communities where they feel safe.

Councillor Thompson noted that so often public support and public engagement with the Council is related to the perception residents have in how fair and responsive we are as a Council. He noted that it was pleasing to see a strategic ambition for stronger communities and targeting support to make things fairer. He stated how all Communities are linked to the Community Area Forums and a significant way of targeting support could be done through the CAF's. He was concerned about a potential re-structure of the CAF's, he felt this could be at the expense of making the communities stronger.

Councillor Hetherington highlighted the ongoing work with Adult Social Care and Public Health, she noted that there was still a lot of work to do for the health outcomes and life expectancy within the population in South Tyneside, but that progress was steady in achieving this. Public Health teams were tailoring resources to needs by taking advantage of improved modelling and data to inform the work through population health management approaches.

Councillor Robertson stated that the Council's financial support for food banks should be better publicised, suggesting that if people were more aware of where funding came from then they may feel more comfortable about using them, it may remove some of the stigma or embarrassment.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Reason for decision: The South Tyneside Vision and Strategy identify a clear set of strategic ambitions and priority actions in the context of a very challenging public sector operating context. This report sets out the significant progress made during the last three months whilst the Council also continues to provide a huge range of critical 'business-as-usual' services. Further updates will be provided in the coming months.

5. "Democracy: A Year Of Action" Campaign

Submitted: Report of the Director of Governance and Corporate Affairs

Councillor Bell, Lead Member for Governance, Finance and Corporate

Services presented the report which updated Council on a planned engagement campaign which sought to increase residents awareness and involvement in local democracy, elections, and the work of Elected Members. A year- round campaign of events, activities and communications have been planned. The new programme named 'Democracy: A Year of Action' will replace the former traditional 'Democracy Week' activities. The timetable of planned events was presented for consideration.

Councillor Best noted that it had been good to see such a positive approach which reinforced that democracy is not just once a year but underpins all that the Council does, complementing the daily work across all departments. She emphasised that it was important to challenge misconceptions about local governance and how it works as well as encouraging local people to get involved.

Councillor Francis welcomed the report and observed it was the Council's duty to strengthen democracy and ensure everyone could have faith in it and was able to engage. He was encouraged to see that Committee chairs would be provided with information on how to raise the profile of democracy and resident engagement and looked forward to seeing this develop across all Committee meetings, in particular at the CAF meetings. He asked whether the Council currently had a specific consultation session with regards to the Council's budget each year with the South Tyneside Young People's parliament.

Councillor Robertson queried whether the local MPs had been involved in the project and whether it had included any opposition members.

Councillor Bell informed Council that this was a project where for the first-time officer teams had worked directly with both the Lead Member and the Champion for Democracy. She noted that the programme would include all Council Members, the Council was just starting on this programme of works, there will be changes and additions to the programme throughout the year. The local MPs had not been involved as this was a Council project, not an MP or Government one. She also noted that the Youth Parliament had not been involved in the budget consultation but that it was something that could be considered. Historically the young people had been involved in the democracy activities and would be included in this programme.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Reason for Decision: The work outlined supports the Council's vision of making South Tyneside a place where people live happy, healthy, fulfilled lives, as it supports local people to play an active role in local democracy and in the decisions that shape their communities.

6. Cost of Living Response Update

Submitted: Report of the Director of Governance and Corporate Affairs

Councillor Berkley, Lead Member for the Voluntary Sector, Partnerships and Equalities, presented the report which provided Council with an update on the work undertaken to support residents through the cost of living crisis.

The Cost-of-Living Summit had highlighted five core themes and the response had concentrated on these areas. The report covered the work which the Council had done to understand the situation across the Borough.

To support the communities with the matters highlighted at the summit the following work had been undertaken:

- Supported 67 warm spaces, welcoming over 450 residents in December;
- Established a Warm Spaces Support Fund with fantastic support from local businesses to provide additional resources to warm spaces;
- Increased crisis funding and provided Council Tax Support and hardship relief to residents on the lowest incomes;
- Allocated Household Support Funding (in close partnership with the community and voluntary sector) to pensioners, school holiday provision, food vouchers and those not eligible for benefits;
- Began to roll out energy efficiency programmes to reduce bills for those who most need it;

A range of communications and events work had focussed on ensuring residents knew what support was available across the Borough.

In order to increase the access to the services to ensure the people requiring help could in fact access what was required the Council had:

- Created an online platform to share information amongst partners;
- Invested in the Welfare Support Team to increase their capacity and worked closely with partner agencies such as Citizens Advice, to help them assist our residents to claim over £4.8m and £6m respectively in benefits over the past year;
- Matched experts to warm spaces and events, such as the vaccine bus;
- Worked with schools to share best practice on poverty proofing;
- Put new multi-agency structures in place to aid decision-making.

The crisis had accentuated the disparity between residents in the borough, it was noted that it was crucial that these issues were raised as there is a limit to what the Council can do. The Council had written to Government Ministers and energy companies to explain the

concerns as well working with the Local Government Association and the Co-operative Council's Innovation Network to share and learn from other experiences.

The report also outlined future areas of focus planned across the five core themes aimed at further helping residents across South Tyneside.

Councillor Robertson questioned what areas the Key2Lives community food bus covered and asked whether a food bus could cover the areas that it didn't.

Resolved: That Council notes and endorses the work undertaken on responding to the cost of living crisis and supports the continued work in this area to ensure the Council remains committed to tackling poverty and making things fairer.

Reason for decision: To help ensure that the Council continues to both help support people through the cost of living crisis and take a real partnership approach to doing so.

7. Ocean Recovery Declaration – “Motion for the Ocean”

Submitted: Report of the Director of Regeneration and Environment

Councillor Gibson, Lead Member for Transport and Neighbourhoods, presented the report which provided an annual update on the Council's Ocean Recovery Declaration – “Motion for the Ocean.”

In January 2022, the Council made an Ocean Recovery Declaration through the ‘Motion for the Ocean’. In this declaration it is recognised that the Council needed ocean recovery to meet the net zero carbon targets, and it needed net zero carbon targets to recover the ocean.

The report set out the progress in relation to the 9 pledges contained in the Motion.

Councillor Meling noted the Climate Change Toolkit as an excellent resource for education and raising awareness. She explained that companies such as Equinor and SSE were providing opportunities in STEM subjects and working with local schools. She also highlighted the Stronger Shores project, noting that partnership working was key to delivering objectives.

Councillor Stonehouse queried if the Council had received a response following a letter to the Secretary of State calling on the Government to

act regarding Ocean Recovery. Councillor Gibson advised Council had not yet received a reply.

Councillor Herbert noted that sewage was not mentioned in the report and raised concerns around the discharging of untreated sewage into the sea. He referred to recent approval for a new housing development. He felt there was inadequate capacity in the current system to cope with the waste from any new homes and that Northumbrian Water should be made to increase their sewage treatment capacity. He suggested that the application by Northumbrian Water for additional connections be called in and the Council request a public enquiry into the Whitburn and Hendon sewage system. Sunderland City Council had done this and asked if a letter could be sent for a public enquiry on this.

Councillor Forster echoed these concerns, noting that he had asked the Director of Public Health to provide a response regarding his opinion on the possible consequences to public health should the new development go ahead. He asked which part of pledge 2 was considered by the Planning Committee on 13 February 2023 and if they did consider the pledge why did they agree to the development that day rather than defer the decision until further evidence and clarity on certain points had been sought.

Councillor Dixon responded to the query with regards to the letter that was sent in December to the SOS for Environment, to which the Council was awaiting a response. The Council asked for an update on the Marine Policy statement and requested that the National Ocean Recovery strategy be produced. She stated that with regards to the query on the planning application that she would not discuss planning applications or their outcomes. She noted that she had received a number of emails with regards to concerns about the Whitburn outturn, she reassured Members that letters had been sent to Sir James Bevan Chief Executive for the Environment Agency and to the SOS for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Therese Coffey requesting answers and asking for the process to be looked at.

Councillor Gibson informed Council that Northumbrian Water were to attend a Members Communications session in the near future, this was to be arranged in due course. Members would have the opportunity to ask the relevant questions.

Resolved: That the update be noted and Council continue to support the Council's Ocean Recovery Declaration.

Reason for decision: To keep members fully informed of actions being taken in support of the Ocean Recovery Declaration.

8. Ecological Emergency Declaration

Submitted: Report of the Place Select Committee

In February 2022, a Motion to declare an Ecological Emergency was presented to Council and it was agreed that the matter would be considered by the Place Select Committee. A cross party Ecological Emergency working group was formed to consider and revise the declaration and form an action plan.

The Chair of Place Select, Councillor Kilgour presented the report of the Select Committee which gave an overview of an updated Ecological Emergency Declaration and associated action plan.

The full declaration and action plan was appended to the report for information; this would be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

Councillors Francis and Guy spoke in support of the cross-party collaboration work undertaken, they felt it had been really productive and were keen to start work on the action plan.

Councillor Hetherington asked that when work started on the action plan that the group identify valuable urban woodland and nature reserves and include them in the action plans. She noted that they were vital, providing open spaces and vital habitats for wildlife. She also asked that when looking at the actions the working group seek the views and opinions of the voluntary groups as it was essential that they are included to ensure a co-produced action plan.

Resolved: That (a) the report be noted; (b) an Ecological Emergency be declared; and (c) the associated action plan be agreed.

Reason for decision: The ecological crisis and resulting collapse of vital life-support systems that nature provides threatens life as we know it. Restoring nature is critical and action is needed now at a local level to reverse decline. This declaration supports the Council's "Strong Communities" ambition to support green and sustainable choices and behaviours in connection to the natural world.

9. To consider any questions received under Procedure Rule 8

One question was received under Council Procedure Rule 8 from Madeleine Nettleship on behalf of the Keep Our NHS Public North East and Save South Tyneside Hospital Campaign, as follows:

As I am sure the council is aware, the Health & Care Act 2022 had changes introduced in July 2022 whereby the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System is now responsible for commissioning all healthcare for the people of South Tyneside.

This takes the decision making about OUR healthcare further away from our council representatives and even further from public involvement in deciding the future of OUR health service.

We would like to know how South Tyneside Council intends to promote both scrutiny and local participation in the decision making about OUR NHS. And how they would try to prevent representatives of the private sector participating in such decisions by the ICS on the present and future of health care in South Tyneside and elsewhere in the North East.

It was confirmed that Mrs Nettleship would receive a written response to her question within 7 days. The question and answer provided would be added to the Question Book open to public inspection.

Councillor Thompson asked whether a verbal response to questions may be more suitable if the question was deemed urgent and was advised that this had been given due consideration, but a written response was considered appropriate.

10. To consider any petitions received under Procedure Rule 9

No petitions were received under Council Procedure Rule 9.

There were two petitions submitted to the meeting of Borough Council held 24 November 2022 due for update from the appropriate body.

Petition 1 - To object to the building of a 'garage' in the rear garden of 15 Boldon Lane with access onto High Sandgrove via a dropped kerb. The petition contained 27 signatories, 27 of which were in the Borough.

The petition was referred to the Council's Director of Regeneration and Environment as the relevant appropriate body.

Appropriate body response:

The petition was considered by one of the Council's Senior Planning officers along with a number of related matters raised separately but at the same time, by the Lead Petitioner.

An application for the granting of a Lawful Development Certificate had been made in respect of the substance of the petition, namely for the construction of the garage, and associated works, including the creation of access onto High Sandgrove via a dropped kerb.

A Lawful Development Certificate differs from a planning application, as it is essentially a means of obtaining a decision from a planning authority that a particular proposal does not require planning permission. The application was considered against the background of governmental guidance and was found to benefit from the permitted development

rights as set out in Classes E & F of Part 1 of the Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment) (No.2) (England) Order 2005. In short, the proposal was found not to require planning permission.

The Government's permitted development rights also include works to provide a dropped kerb. However, the Council did exercise its powers under S.184 of the Highways Act 1980, to require the setting back of the proposed gates and fence to provide intervisibility of the dropped kerb accessway to both vehicles and pedestrians.

The statutory planning system does not provide for neighbour representations to be canvassed or indeed considered in respect of applications for lawful development certificates.

Petition 2 - To ask South Tyneside Council to designate Disco Fields as a Local Green Space. The petition contained 496 signatories, 461 of which were in the Borough.

The petition was referred to the Council's Director of Regeneration and Environment as the relevant appropriate body.

Appropriate body response:

The Council recognises the value of protecting open green spaces for future recreational use and has recently worked with Fields In Trust to designate land accordingly. Following internal discussions regarding the petition, the Council confirms that they are willing to work with Fields In Trust to ascertain if the land at Disco Fields meets their (FIT's) specific requirements, and if so, commence the application to designate it as a Field In Trust so that it can be protected in perpetuity.

Resolved: That the petitions stand referred to the appropriate bodies and the update be noted.

Reason for Decision: To ensure the requirements of Council Procedure Borough Council Rule 9.14 are met.

11. To consider any Motions received under Procedure Rule 10

The Mayor advised that four motions had been submitted under this rule.

Councillors Strike and M Walsh withdrew from the Chamber.

The following motion was moved by Councillor Hetherington:

Motion 1 – NHS Workers

This council notes that:

NHS Ambulance Service have been faced with a pay offer averaging 4%, and nurses in England offered 4.75%. At a time when inflation for the year is over 10% this amounts to a 6% pay cut for the very workers we clapped for during the pandemic, we are all hugely grateful for the hard work and dedication of all NHS workers.

The Government only budgeted 2.1% increase which is a staggering approx. 8% below inflation.

Nurses in England have been offered 4.75%, Wales between 4.5% and 5% whilst in Scotland this was 7.5%, and Ambulance staff 4%.

NHS Vacancies were counted at 133,400 in the quarter to September 2022. Nursing vacancies 46828, Ambulance Staff 3333.

TUC data shows that since 2008 Paramedics have lost £56,000 equivalent of £4000 per year, nurses have lost £42,000 equivalent of £3000 per year and midwives £56,000 equivalent of £4,000 per year. All of this at a time when figures show that Category 2 emergencies including heart attack and strokes are waiting an average of 1 hour and 36 minutes for an ambulance in South Tyneside.

These figures are staggering. After 13 years of Conservative rule our NHS faces the worst crisis in its history. The terrifying truth is that patients in an emergency in South Tyneside can no longer be sure the NHS will be there for them.

People are our biggest asset and properly funded NHS services are fundamental to this. The NHS, once the envy of the world is on its knees. No amount of reform will change this, if the services are not properly funded and staff fairly rewarded for the work they do. Re-shuffling resources, and finance like pieces on a chess board is not acceptable.

This council resolves:

1. To encourage Elected Members to show solidarity with striking NHS workers;
2. Ask the Leader of the Council to write to MPs to engage with them to show full support for our beleaguered NHS;
3. Ask the Leader to raise this directly with the relevant Secretaries of State and call for them to properly support our vital public services.

Signed

Councillors: Hetherington
Carter
Best
S Dean
P Dean

A Walsh
Berkley
Ellison
Porthouse

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Carter.

Councillor McCabe left the meeting.

The Motion was unanimously carried.

Councillors Strike, M Walsh and McCabe returned to the Chamber.

The following motion was moved by Councillor Ellison:

Motion 2 – Care Experience – Protected Characteristic Motion

The Council notes that:

The Independent Review of Children's Social Care headed by Josh McCallister published in May 2022 a final report and recommendations that included:

“Government should make care experience a protected characteristic following consultation with care experienced people and the Devolved Administrations” and “New legislation should be passed which broadens corporate parenting responsibilities across a wider set of public bodies and organisations.”

On Protected Characteristics for Care Experience – Care Review May 2022:

“Many care experienced people face discrimination, stigma, and prejudice in their day to day lives. Public perceptions of care experience centre on the idea that children are irredeemably damaged and that can lead to discrimination and assumptions being made.

One young person told the review that a teacher had told them “You’re smart - for a kid in care,” another young person said “I don’t want people to point out that I am in care if I don’t want that mentioned. It makes me so cross – that shouldn’t happen.”

This stigma and discrimination can be explicit, and often comes with assumptions about the likely characteristics of children and adults that have care experience. They can also be implicit and are evidenced in

the way care experience is discussed in schools, workplaces, and the media.

At its worst this can lead to care experienced people being refused employment, failing to succeed in education or facing unfair judgements about their ability to parent when they have children and families of their own.

Hearing testimony from care experienced people sharing the discrimination they have experienced, even from a very young age, it is clear that such discrimination can be similar in nature to other groups that have a legally protected characteristic under the Equality Act (2010). So, while there may be ways that society can help reduce stigma and discrimination, including creating greater public consciousness on these issues, just as with other areas of equality, there is a case to go further. Therefore, the government should make care experience a protected characteristic.

Making care experience a protected characteristic would provide greater authority to employers, businesses, public services, and policy makers to put in place policies and programmes which promote better outcomes for care experienced people. It will make the UK the first country in the world to recognise care experienced people in this way. As a measure, it will bolster and pave the way for a number of the recommendations in this chapter."

Care Review May 2022:

Care experienced people face significant barriers that impact them throughout their lives. Despite the resilience of many care experienced people, society too often does not take their needs into account.

- Care experienced people often face discrimination and stigma across housing, health, education, relationships employment and in the criminal justice system;
- Care experienced people often face a postcode lottery of support;
- As corporate parents, councillors have a collective responsibility for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for the children who are looked after by us as an authority;
- All corporate parents should commit to acting as mentors, hearing the voices of looked after children and young people and to consider their needs in any aspect of council work;
- Councillors should be champions of our looked after children and challenge the negative attitudes and prejudice that exists in all aspects of society;
- The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public bodies, such as councils, to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation of people with protected characteristics.

Council is asked to resolve to:

1. The Council recognises that care experienced people are a group who are likely to face discrimination;
2. That it recognises that Councils have a duty to put the needs of disadvantaged people at the heart of decision-making through co-production and collaboration;
3. That future decisions, services and policies made and adopted by the Council should, where appropriate, determine the impact of changes on people with care experience;
4. To continue to proactively seek out and listen to the voices of care experienced people when developing new policies based on their views; and commend the work that our Participation Team do with our Children in Care Council and MAGIC groups;
5. Ask the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive to write to the appropriate Secretary of State making clear our support for care experience being designated as a protected characteristic, and calling on the Government to implement this at their earliest opportunity by carrying out the consultation;
6. Ask the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive to raise this with regional colleagues and work towards a regional response to this recommendation within the Independent Review of Children's Social Care.

Signed

Councillors: Ellison
Foreman
Atkinson
Proudlock
Berkley
Meling

The motion was seconded by Councillor Robertson.

Councillor Robertson proposed an amendment to the motion as follows:

South Tyneside Council resolves:

Resolutions 1, 2 and 4 remain as presented.

Resolutions 3, 5 and 6 be amended to include the additional words in bold below.

3. That future decisions, services and policies made and adopted by the Council should, where appropriate, **be assessed through Equality Impact Assessments** to determine the impact of changes on people with care experience, **alongside those who formally share a protected characteristic.**
 5. Ask the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive **and the two local MPs** to write to the appropriate Secretary of State making clear our support for care experience being designated as a protected characteristic, and calling on the Government to implement this at their earliest opportunity by carrying out the consultation.
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6. Ask the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive **and two local MPs** to raise this with regional colleagues and towards a regional response to this recommendation within the Independent Review of Childrens Social Care

Signed
Councillors Robertson
Milburn
Kennedy
Roberts
Forster

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Ellison.

Councillor Ellison noted he was satisfied that the amendments made the motion stronger.

The amended motion was unanimously carried.

The following motion was moved by Councillor Porthouse:

Motion 3 – Voter ID

This council notes that:

The Elections Act passed through Parliament in early 2022 and introduced a new requirement for photographic voter identification at Parliamentary elections, Police and Crime Commissioner elections, and local polls in England. This new requirement will come into force at the local elections on 4 May 2023.

In preparation for this change, the Electoral Commission has launched a public awareness campaign. The campaign will include a combination of mass media and targeted digital advertising to maximise the reach of the campaign. In addition, the Commission has developed a range of resources to help local authorities to support residents to understand the new requirements.

The Council is already undertaking a media campaign urging South Tyneside residents to make sure they are ready to vote by checking they have an accepted form of ID and, if they don't, to apply for free ID online or by completing a paper form.

Current research suggests that around four per cent of people may not have any form of photo ID or their photo ID may not be acceptable. This means that this May, approximately 3,200 polling station voters in South Tyneside are at risk of losing their ability to vote.

A number of key national organisations such as the LGA, the Electoral Commission, the Association of Electoral Administrators and many other experts have also raised the concerns about this.

South Tyneside Council recognises the barriers that this legislation will present to some resident within our communities from exercising their right to vote, whether that be due to lack of appropriate ID or lack of knowledge of this new requirement in order to vote.

In South Tyneside we have a proud record of promoting democracy and ways of engaging with the democratic process. From participation in Local Democracy Weeks, our engagement with schools and community groups, to the appointment of a Democracy Champion in May 2022.

We must act collectively in order to ensure that all of our residents are able to exercise their right to vote.

This council resolves:

1. To instruct the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive (as Returning Officer) to write to the Cabinet Office on behalf of the whole council raising concerns about the barriers to voting that Voter ID will create and the timeline for implementation ;
2. Undertake further work to ensure that residents of the borough are aware of this important change to the way we vote through our various mediums of publicity;
3. Build upon the success of 'Local Democracy Week' and broaden this out to create more opportunities for residents – and specifically those in marginalised groups – to understand the democratic process and how they can participate and provide a deeper understanding of the work that we do within local government and with our partners.

Signed

Councillors: Porthouse
Ellison
Hetherington
Berkley
Potts

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Ellison.

Councillor Robertson moved an amendment to the motion as follows:

Resolutions 1 and 2 be amended to include the additional words in bold below.

Resolution 3 remain as presented.

An additional resolution be included at point 4.

1. **Request** the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive (as Returning Officer) **and the two local MPs**, to write to the Cabinet Office on behalf of the whole Council raising concerns

about the barriers to voting that Voter ID will create and the timeline for implementation.

2. Undertake, **in partnership with the two local MPs**, further work to ensure that residents of the borough are aware of this important change to the way we vote through our various mediums of publicity.
4. **In the same spirit we will ensure that we work with the two local MPs, including inviting each of them to attend regular Full Council meetings to clearly demonstrate to the residents of the borough how democracy works at all levels of government.**

Signed
Councillors Robertson
Kennedy
Milburn
Roberts
Forster

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Roberts.

A show of hands vote on the amendment was taken. The votes were cast as follows:

For: 3
Against: 33
Abstain: 7

Councillor Milburn was not in attendance for this item.

Councillor Best did not partake in the vote as she worked for the MP mentioned in the amended motion.

The amendment was not carried.

The original motion was carried.

Councillor Robertson left the meeting.

The following motion was moved by Councillor Gibson:

Motion 4 – Transport £2 Fare

This council notes that:

Until March 2023, the UK Government have temporarily funded a 2 cap on the cost of bus travel. The funding, whilst limited, contributed to a real boost for local travellers on the networks.

As a Council who declared a Climate Change Emergency in 2019, we recognise that public transport has a critical role to play in reducing carbon emissions.

We are aware that negotiations are ongoing with the local bus operators and Nexus as to a capped ticketing approach as part of the North East Enhanced Bus Partnership.

As we rapidly approach the end of this temporary Government investment, this council resolves to:

1. Instruct the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Transport and the Chancellor of the Exchequer to expand this funding and cap bus fares at least until the cost-of-living crisis is behind us;
2. Instruct South Tyneside Council's representatives on the Joint Transport Committee to raise this regionally and ask that the JTC take this up with Government;
3. Request that the Director of Regeneration and Environment works with regional colleagues as we consider regional devolution arrangements to ensure that we explore all options available to us.

Signed

Councillors: Gibson
Porthouse
Ellison
Atkinson
Hetherington

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Porthouse.

An amendment to the motion from Councillor Robertson had been circulated, but as he was not in attendance to move this amendment as he had left the meeting, nor was it moved by anyone else in attendance at the meeting, the original motion was carried unanimously.

ANNEX 1 Does not form part of the Minutes of the Meeting. Answers to questions arising at the meeting are provided for information. Answers were neither noted nor recorded during the meeting.

Questions under Council Procedure Rule 8

Question from Madeleine Nettleship on behalf of the Keep Our NHS Public North East and Save South Tyneside Hospital Campaign, as follows:

As I am sure the council is aware, the Health & Care Act 2022 had changes introduced in July 2022 whereby the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System is now responsible for commissioning all healthcare for the people of South Tyneside.

This takes the decision making about OUR healthcare further away from our council representatives and even further from public involvement in deciding the future of OUR health service.

We would like to know how South Tyneside Council intends to promote both scrutiny and local participation in the decision making about OUR NHS. And how they would try to prevent representatives of the private sector participating in such decisions by the ICS on the present and future of health care in South Tyneside and elsewhere in the North East.

Written Response to Mrs Nettleship

The Director of Adult Social Services and Commissioning and the Director of Public Health provided the following response.

In response to your question, please note the following:

The 2022 Health and Care Act entailed significant structural change for NHS commissioning seeing the abolition of Clinical Commissioning Groups and Integrated Care Boards (ICB) taking on taking on some commissioning responsibilities from NHS England, including the commissioning of primary care and some specialised services (with a plan for further delegation over time), giving local systems a greater say in how budgets for these services are spent in their area. South Tyneside Council is working with South Tyneside Directors of the ICB to understand how we work collaboratively to ensure we commission services for the needs of our local population.

These shifts build on changes to commissioning that have been underway for several years. Before their abolition, many CCGs had been working more closely together at a system level through joint management structures or formal mergers and the number of CCGs had fallen significantly. At the same time, many CCGs were working more closely with local councils to align and integrate commissioning for NHS and local authority services. The role of commissioners is to work closely with key partners across the system (including with providers) to understand population needs, determine key priorities and design, plan and resource services to meet those needs.

The role of the Council is to ensure through its overview and scrutiny functions that the relevant decision-making processes are followed in accordance with the organisational constitutional and governance frameworks. As part of those processes and scrutiny functions, there will be a key role in ensuring the voices of residents are heard and where new approaches and services are being considered these are coproduced with local people, something that is equally important to South Tyneside Council.

Unfortunately, this response was not sent to Mrs Nettleship within the 7 day period required in the Constitution part D, section 1, paragraph 8.14.1

ANNEX 1

QUESTIONS ARISING WITHIN THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL 9 MARCH 2023

Item 6 – Cost of Living Response Update

Question from Councillor Robertson

Councillor Robertson questioned what areas the Key2Lifes community food bus covered and asked whether a food bus could cover the areas that it didn't.

Written Response

Council officers are working closely with Key2Life on their community food bus project, including the locations the bus will visit when it launches this Summer. The bus will stop in locations identified as areas of highest deprivation and need, particularly those classified as food deserts (geographic areas that have limited access to healthy food) or food swaps (geographic areas with adequate access to healthy food retail, but that also features an overabundance of exposure to less healthy food and beverages). It is likely that there will be stops in the majority of wards across the borough. Officers will continue to work closely with Key2Life and partners through the South Tyneside Poverty Group to maximise the impact of the bus.