

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE, HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC CENTRE, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE ON WEDNESDAY 2 October 2024 AT 6.00PM**

**PRESENT:**

The Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor of Newcastle upon Tyne (Councillor R Higgins)

Councillors: I Ali, N Ali, P Allen, Allen, S Anthony, R Ashby, R Austin, A Avaei, M Barnett, S Barry-Stanners, G Bell, P Browne, D Burns, J Byrne, T Cairns, A Chisholm, J Coles, M Cookson, M Donnelly, M Donnelly, L Ellis, S Fairlie, C Ferguson, P Frew, H Gallagher, D Greenhough, J Hall, N Hartley, A Hay, L Hobson, D Huddart, L Hunter, N Joanne, G Kane, K Kilgour, J Kingsland, S Lambert, P Maines, J McCarty, M Mafemba, A Mitchell, M Mitchell, T Mitchell, C Morrissey, PJ Morrissey, K Musharraf, C Penny-Evans, B Phillipson, S Powers, H Qureshi, H Rahman, K Robinson, M Sadiq, A Samad, J Sathian, R Shatwell, H Stephenson, G Stone, L Storey, W Taylor, A Walker, M Williams, D Wood, M Wood and L Wright

**57 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors Anand, Campion, Cummings, Kemp, Lowson, Pattison, J Robinson, Stokel-Walker, S Wood and Woodwark.

**58 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

Council agreed the minutes of the special meeting held on 4 September 2024.

Council agreed the minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 4 September 2024.

Regarding the minutes of the ordinary meeting on 4 September, Councillor Lovatt asked when he could expect an answer from Councillor Williams, to his question asked at the July meeting of Council, regarding a bus shelter on Gosforth High Street.

**59 OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Lord Mayor advised members that the Bishop of Newcastle was conducting the Remembrance Sunday service at the war memorial in Eldon Square on 10 November.

The Lord Mayor took the opportunity to remind members of the session on Wednesday 10 October about the Tyne and Wear Lord Lieutenancy in the Civic Centre, and the Prevent session on 23 October which would be online, both at 5.30pm.

The Lord Mayor advised that a request had been received to change the order of business to bring forward item 14 – the notice of motion “Care Leaver Status as a Protected Characteristic” - to after item 6, public question time.

**RESOLVED** - Council agreed to the change in the order of the items of business on the agenda.

To conclude the official announcements the Lord Mayor welcomed the newly elected member for North Jesmond ward, Councillor Peter Allen, back into the chamber and to Council.

## 60 **CORRESPONDENCE**

None received this month.

## 61 **PETITIONS**

The Lord Mayor advised that one petition had been received regarding pollution in the Ouseburn and called on Councillor Peter Allen (on behalf of Councillor Coles) to present the petition on behalf of residents of the city.

The Lord Mayor congratulated Councillor Allen on his maiden speech.

The Lord Mayor invited Councillor Irim Ali to respond.

Councillor Ali said the Council recognised the unacceptable levels of pollution and the public demand for improvements. The Ouseburn Way partnership had been set up following an offer of seed funding from the Reese Foundation.

The partnership included the Environment Agency Northumbrian Water and North Tyneside Council.

The Ouseburn Way vision document set out proposals to improve the environment in and around the Ouseburn, improving access and recognising the importance of the river to local communities.

Northumbrian Water’s drainage and waste water management plan set out how the company intended to tackle storm overflows. The Ouseburn Way partnership was working to accelerate improvement measures for storm overflows that contributed to the pollution levels in the Ouseburn.

The Council was in the process of recruiting an Ouseburn Way Development Manager who would develop an investment programme for environmental improvements over the next two years as well as progressing opportunities for quick wins during that time. The post would report direct to the Ouseburn Way partnership board.

Alongside this, an Ouseburn Action Group spearheaded by an independent programme manager was being set up. This would provide the scientific context for the Ouseburn Way Development Manager to work in with, together with an agreement around data capture and the creation of a digital platform for data.

Recognising the public interest in this issue, an Ouseburn group of citizen scientists would collect data as identified in the monitoring agreement.

Councillor Ali went on to say that storm overflows were not the only contributor to pollution levels and eradicating them would not bring the water quality up to a level that improved the status of the Ouseburn. It was equally important to address chemical contributions from agricultural run off and heavy metals from highway run off as well as misconnections into service water sewars following development.

A robust investment plan would need to address all of the pollution sources.

The Ouseburn Catchment Partnership was the forum that brought together key stakeholders such as the universities, rivers trusts, wildlife groups, developers and land owners who could contribute to improvements in the Ouseburn. The partnerships were working to a point to have an investment model in place, with funding sources identified and backed up by scientific research.

Councillor Ali said she would email the full response to Councillor Allen and that she formally accepted the petition.

**RESOLVED** - Council agreed to receive the petition.

## 62 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Lord Mayor informed members that one request to address Council had been received and invited Brian Moore to lectern.

Mr Moore's address concerned buses and traffic flow around Gosforth.

Councillor Williams (Cabinet member for a sustainable city) responded to Mr Moore and thanked him for addressing Council.

She said that, with regard to the bus lanes being made permanent on Gosforth High Street, the data and public feedback had been looked at and recognised that the scheme worked well with bus passengers seeing improvements in journey times and bus reliability; this was exactly the change needed to encourage people out of their cars and onto public transport. The scheme was the first phase of the plans for this area which focussed on prioritising public transport.

Councillor Williams went on to say that the Council would contact residents of Linden Road about traffic speed and road safety on the street. Considering a proposal for a no entry restriction, the Council had collected traffic data to determine whether there was a need for traffic management measures to be implemented. Whilst the level of traffic in Linden Road was more than the Council would like to see in the residential street, there was no evidence to back up claims that traffic flow had increased following the introduction of other schemes elsewhere in Gosforth. Historical data showed that traffic flows had been consistent over a period of more than 15 years and data collected in 2008 showed higher traffic levels than this current year. As a further comparison, from 2016, traffic flow was almost identical to that of today. Based on a review of the traffic data including speed and accident

history, an intervention could not be justified at this stage, although the Council would continue to monitor the situation.

The Council had also consulted on the Hyde Terrace / Christon Road junction and the results had shown that 135 residents opposed the scheme, significantly more than the 28 responses received in support. Additional surveys had recently been procured to identify the number of contraventions of the no-entry restriction from Christon Road to Hyde Terrace. The result of these surveys indicated that, on average, over a 100 vehicles a day contravened the restriction; this was clearly a cause for concern and the information would be forwarded to Northumbria Police for action to be taken as necessary. The location would also be added to the potential locations for camera enforcement.

Regarding the installation of cameras on the yellow box at the junction at Christon Road and the Great North Road, the team were currently working on the final design in relation to the location of the cameras.

Due to time restrictions on this item, Councillor Williams advised that further information would be provided in writing to Mr Moore.

The Lord Mayor invited Mr Moore to reply.

Mr Moore responded that Linden Road was now identified on online maps as the main road through Gosforth. This was a residential road and by the Council's figures, 1000 vehicles a day were using it. Also, the junction of Jubilee and Linden Roads had multiple shunts. He said there was unanimous support in Gosforth for restrictions on Linden Road. This was also the main cycle route for that side of the High Street, and he felt it was lethal to cycle on that road.

Mr Moore thanked Council for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the residents of Linden Road.

## 63 **NOTICE OF MOTION - CARE LEAVER STATUS AS A PROTECTED CHARACTERISTIC**

In accordance with the notice previously given Councillor Storey moved, seconded by Councillor Christine Morrissey, that:-

"Newcastle City Council believes that 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.

Newcastle City Council acknowledges that children entering the care system are often split from their siblings and placed outside their home local authority area, that they don't choose to enter the care system, that they don't choose to be split up from their siblings and don't choose to be placed outside their local area.

A group of Newcastle children in care and care leavers have considered how the acceptance of care experience as a protected characteristic would impact on their lives, they reflected:

'It would help stop discrimination.'

'It would help align offers regionally.'

'If it was a protected characteristic people would have more rights in employment and stuff.'

One young person very eloquently expressed his view as follows:

'We all know young people are the future of this great city. We see it in our educational settings, we see it in our employment sector with our apprenticeships and for those who are parents, we see it with our own eyes as they go through their development stages and find their feet in this ever-changing world.

But what about care experienced young people? To those looking in from the outside, we are just a group of young people who have had a difficult start to life and need extra support in our day-to-day lives. We've been described as "hard work" and even "not all bad". However, what we are is not that we are hard work and no, we are "not all bad", very few of us are. What we really are is a group of hard-working individuals who want to see a positive, supportive city so that young people in the future who are of a care experienced background can still be proud of where they live and still feel like they can offer a lot to their city.

To really unlock the potential that care experienced young people have and to support them for years to come, there is one solution. Give us a say. Let our voices and opinions be heard. Understand the impact your decisions have on us. Let's make the city a welcoming space for care experienced young people like we know we can. Let's make being care experienced a protected characteristic.'

Newcastle City Council therefore resolves to ask Cabinet:

1. That when making any decisions in relation to its policies or formulating its Council Plan it recognises that care experienced people are a vulnerable group who face discrimination;
2. That it recognises that councils have a duty to put the needs of vulnerable people at the heart of decision-making through co-production and collaboration;
3. That in the delivery of the Public Sector Equality Duty the Council includes care experience in the publication and review of Equality Objectives and the annual

publication of information relating to people who share a Protected Characteristic in services and employment;

4. That this Council will treat care experience as if it were a Protected Characteristic so that future services and policies made and adopted by the Council should 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. To formally call upon all other bodies to treat care experience as a Protected Characteristic until such time as it may be introduced by legislation;
6. To formally call upon all other bodies to adopt corporate parenting for children in care and care leavers until such time as it may be introduced by legislation;
7. For the Council to proactively seek out and listen to the voices of care experienced people when developing new policies based on their views.
8. To be Proud of, Fair towards and Ambitious for the care experienced young people of Newcastle.”

**RESOLVED** – That the cross-party motion was unanimously agreed by Council.

## 64 **QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS**

The Lord Mayor advised that three questions marked for **oral reply** had been received and under Standing Order 9(a) the questions were deemed to have been put.

In response to the question from Councillor Mark Mitchell, Councillor Irim Ali (Cabinet member for a Resilient City) said that the Welfare Rights Service did provide a city-wide offer of support to all residents across the City. The additional support provided into the Blakelaw, West Fenham, Kenton, Wingrove, Arthur's Hill, Elswick, and Monument wards was based on additional funding provided by those wards to offer additional targeted Welfare Rights support.

As a supplemental question, Councillor Mitchell said he was happy with the service provided in West Fenham but it had a direct impact on the ward budget. He also said the service was not available to residents in the Outer West or the East of the city. As a supplemental question he asked why this service was not being centrally managed and funded across the city, rather than at ward level.

Councillor Ali said that her understanding was that every resident was entitled to use the city wide service but members did have the option to use ward funding to provide welfare services.

As a further supplemental Councillor Cookson advised that the Voluntary Sector Liaison Group (VSLG) had been informed that £90m in benefits went unclaimed across the city each year and the group was aware of plans to introduce a lift or low income family tracker project that would help city residents claim benefits they were entitled to. If this project had happened there would have been an opportunity to build on the expertise in the East End and expand it, rather than relying on ward funded project. Councillor Cookson asked for an update on the project.

Cllr Ali said she would provide information in writing on the specific project raised in the supplemental question.

In response to the question from Councillor Ferguson, Councillor Kilgour said that local government was rightly a highly regulated working environment with a uniquely comprehensive set of standards, rules, risk assurance processes and accountabilities all in the public domain.

There were robust arrangements in place to ensure that the Council delivered best value to residents and to continually improve delivery.

Addressing the question of confidence in delivery, Councillor Kilgour reiterated the various governance arrangements which demonstrate assurance that the council was well run, including the constitution, the Newcastle Charter, various codes of conduct, protocols and policies, adherence to Nolan's Seven Principals of Public Life, scrutiny procedure rules, financial regulations, access to information rules, plus the Annual Governance Statement, external auditor reports and regular reports from the Monitoring Officer to Audit and Standards Committee. In these channels any issues were publicly raised, acknowledged and robustly addressed.

Councillor Kilgour said that the people of Newcastle had shown their confidence and put their trust firmly in the Labour Party in recent months at various elections and providing she was appointed Leader of Council, she gave a commitment that her door would always be open to all members in the chamber.

In response to a supplemental question from Councillor Ferguson, Councillor Kilgour reiterated her offer, as set out above.

As a supplemental question, Councillor Stone asked if Councillor Kilgour would publish responses to the 20 questions identified by Lord Evans, Chair of the Committee on Standard in Public Life, to prompt reflection and discussion on the importance of ethical leadership in the UK.

Councillor Kilgour agreed, but with the caveat that she had not seen the document in question.

Replying to a supplemental question from Councillor Taylor, Councillor Kilgour stated that she would not be drawn into something that could be construed as commentary on an ongoing process. Both sides in any complaint had a right to a fair hearing, the process should be confidential and allowed to be completed without political interference or commentary.

The final oral question was from Councillor Lovatt to Councillor Maines (Cabinet member for a Living City). In her response Councillor Maines said the 2024 season had been very challenging grass cutting conditions for the teams with the prolonged spells of warm, wet weather. This had also caused shrubs and hedges to grow more quickly than they usually would. It was not possible to cut all areas at the same time and teams worked cyclically across the city. Managing residents' expectations could be challenging as teams could not always attend a site at the same time.

Most of the Housing land in Fawdon & West Gosforth received the same cutting service as all Council owned open space land, as set out on the Council's website.

Conewood House was the only location in Fawdon & West Gosforth that was maintained under a service level agreement. This had been reviewed for the current financial year and there were no issues.

As per Council policy, shrubs were cut back during the months of October and April so as not to interfere with nesting birds. Therefore, it could not be guaranteed that all hedges in the ward would be cut back and trimmed by the end of 2024, although they would be done by March 2025 at the latest. Where possible, shrub areas that were particularly problematic would be prioritised during the shrub pruning period starting in October.

As per the Council website, reports of urgent and dangerous problems with shrubs, or of a serious hazard blocking walkways or paths, or of issues causing serious visibility problems on roads would be assessed by Highways and necessary works carried out within 1 working day. Requests for general shrub or hedge maintenance would see any necessary works carried out within 6 months.

As a supplemental question, Councillor Lovatt asked if Councillor Maines had been out to look at the conditions of the gardens and hedges in his ward. Officers had agreed that works were not being done in accordance with the schedule.

Councillor Maines said she would speak to the relevant director and put a process in place to meet and have a look at this.

The Lord Mayor informed Council that **one question for written reply** had been received; this together with the response, had been circulated at the meeting and published on the website.

## 65 **POINT OF ORDER**

Councillor Ferguson raised a point of order under Standing Order 3D and moved a motion proposing that agenda item 18 be moved up the agenda to be debated after item 10 on the agenda. This was duly seconded.

Following a vote the motion was lost with 31 votes in favour and 29 votes against.

## 66 **CABINET MEMBER REPORTS**

### (a) **Resilient City**

Submitted: Report by Councillor Ali (Cabinet Member for a Resilient City) (previously circulated and copy attached to official minutes).

Councillor Ali introduced the report and stated that the report highlighted some of the great work being delivered in the city whilst supporting the Council's political priorities of inclusive economy, anti-poverty and net zero. She went on to say a



further three priorities had been identified within the portfolio – anti-social behaviour and tackling hate crime, waste and environmental crime and reducing congestion and managing traffic flow.

Councillor Ali advised that she was also the Council's lead for equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and oversaw the approach to working with partners and residents around community cohesion. Building on the commitment to be fair and inclusive, the Council would use Black History Month to explore and celebrate black history, heritage and culture for staff and communities.

Councillor Ali highlighted the work of the Empowering People in Communities (EPiC) project in Walker, Elswick and West Denton which involved bringing people together to help rebuild community spirit and shape action plans to tackle issues that mattered most to residents. Options were now being considered to continue the project beyond 2025.

Councillors Sathian, Kane, Hartley, Maines, Browne, Marc Donnelly, Cairns, Cookson, Williams, Hall, Barnett, Stone, Lambert, Huddart, Peter Allen and Rahman asked questions on the report.

The Lord Mayor congratulated Councillor Hall on his maiden speech.

Councillor Ali's responses included the following:

- The food waste trial had gone very well and lots of positive comments had been received from participating residents. More waste was collected in the second week than the first which was encouraging although it was early in the trial. The mandate from the government was that this must be introduced by April 2026 and the learning from the trial would inform the best way to do this. Leaflet and letter drops had been undertaken in the wards where the trial was taking place. The Waste Engagement Team would do some targeted work in areas with low participation.
- The Council continued to celebrate the diversity of disabled communities by awareness raising events and initiatives and as a member of the Disability Confident Scheme. The Scheme recognised the Council's commitment to successfully employing and retaining disabled people and people with long-term health conditions within the workforce.
- Regarding the recent civil unrest, a meeting had been convened of community and faith leaders and leaders of all political parties. This had been the start of the conversation and the Council remained in contact with those community leaders and had asked them how they could be better involved when facing issues. It was more important than ever that the Council continued to put communities at the heart of everything.
- The city centre Safe Hub had been a success following the launch in April 2024 and there had been some phenomenal results in terms of reducing crime and anti-social behaviour.
- The number of shops in the city selling vapes had increased significantly and products were more accessible to children and young people. Products were also being sold by takeaways and pubs and this was concerning. Intelligence suggested that the sale of illegal products was often linked to individuals linked to organised crime groups previously involved with illicit tobacco.

Northumbria Police had linked with HMRC and Trading Standards to form a specialised taskforce to coordinate enforcement activities and this close collaborative working had been highly successful, resulting in the seizure and destruction of significant quantities of non-compliant vaping products. To date, approximately 83,000 products with a street value of £1.2m had been seized in the city. Following positive engagement through Northumbria Police, several retail premises had been closed by the magistrates court, for three month periods, following issues identified with the sale of illegal tobacco products and vapes.

- There were recycling sites for vapes including at the City Library and other libraries across the city.
- Anti-racist training was being rolled out over the next couple of months and it was hoped that all members would take up the training.
- Councillor Ali gave a commitment to speak to HR about personal hygiene facilities to be provided in the civic centre.
- There were now about 10 wardens across the city and more were being recruited. The recruitment of wardens had been challenging and publicity about the role was being increased.
- Councillor Ali would look at the situation regarding gulley clearance although different patterns of rainfall, such as downpour, resulted in gullies being flooded more quickly.
- The poor conditions of roads had huge budget implications and climate change had a huge impact on the state of the roads.

Cllr Ali said that she would send answers to any remaining questions by email.

**RESOLVED** – That Council agreed to receive the report.

**(b) Vibrant City**

Submitted: Report by Councillor Samad (Cabinet Member for a Vibrant City) (previously circulated and copy attached to official minutes).

Councillor Samad introduced the report stating that it highlighted key achievements, challenges and opportunities and also included four case studies on creative central Newcastle, the Novum festival, grass cutting, vehicle tracking and pitch marking. The work of the portfolio focussed on enhancing the quality of life for residents by promoting cultural, leisure and community activities and aimed to ensure that every resident and visitor to the city had access to creative opportunities. Culture made a city thrive and cultural investment had social and economic impacts, including more and better jobs, skills development, inclusivity, wellbeing and civic pride.

Councillor Samad said that during the last year the Green Spaces Management Plan had been published which included information on planned maintenance and cutting regimes for grassed areas and details of the wild-flower verges.

Councillor Samad said that the priority for 2024/25 was to ensure the effective operation of the Contact Centre following the transfer back to the Council in July.

The Council would continue to work with partners to strengthen the city's cultural identity and accessibility as well as continuing to focus on opportunities for investing in the development and promotion of cultural assets.

Councillors Austin, Hartley, Greenhough, Cookson, Marc Donnelly, Cairns, Mark Mitchell, Powers, Chisholm and Rahman asked questions on the report and Councillor Samad's responses included the following:

- Replying to a question regarding the Newcastles of the World Alliance, Councillor Samad said he would be happy to meet with members to discuss how culture could be developed in the city.
- The culture strategy emphasised Newcastle's identity as a vibrant, inclusive city by offering diverse cultural events such as Pride and the Lunar New Year. By attracting investment and boosting civic pride this approach fostered social cohesion and economic growth.
- Balancing different residents' preferences for grass management was a challenge, some wanted more frequent cuts while others preferred natural wild growth. The Council was tailoring new technology, such as tablets and tracking devices, to streamline grass cutting operations and improve transparency.
- Following the transfer of the Contact Centre back to the Council in July the focus was now on reviewing the customer journey, improving back-office processing and upgrading technology to enhance both operational efficiency and the customer experience. Additionally the Council planned to implement updated customer service standards across all channels to ensure a consistent and improved service for residents.
- The Council aimed to tackle physical inactivity by partnering with various organisations to offer affordable and accessible leisure facilities.
- The Council was fully committed to delivering the new leisure centre in the Outer West and it was due to be completed in 2026.
- Councillor Samad said that he was meeting members of the Voluntary Sector Liaison Group (VSLG) group in the coming weeks and hoped that meetings would be scheduled.
- The Urban Green report was scheduled for Cabinet on 25 November.

Councillor Samad made a commitment to respond to any outstanding questions by email.

**RESOLVED** – That Council agreed to receive the report.

## 67 **SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT**

Submitted: Report of Councillor Ferguson, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Coordination Committee, to introduce the report for information and discussion (previously circulated and copy attached to the official minutes).

Councillor Ferguson placed on record his thanks to his predecessor, former Councillor Nick Cott, for his stewardship of the Council's scrutiny function over the past three years. He also placed on record his thanks to the other three scrutiny chairs and to everyone who contributed the Task and Finish Groups. Finally

Councillor Ferguson thanked Scrutiny Officers and Democratic Services Officers for their support and all other officers who engaged with the process.

Councillor Penny-Evans, Vice Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Coordination Committee, also paid tribute to former Councillor Nick Cott and all former member of scrutiny committees. She went on to encourage members to join the scrutiny committees as they were a great way to about the work of the Council, to influence policies and to ask critical friend questions.

Councillor Taylor, Chair of the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee, emphasised the unique role of this committee in having the right to be consulted on any substantial changes to NHS services in the region and for being able to scrutinise outside services such as the Ambulance Service, the Mental Health Trust and, importantly, to oversee the necessary improvements at Newcastle Hospitals following the disappointing CQC report.

Councillor Taylor put on record the committees thanks to Jess Hall (Scrutiny Officer) for her invaluable support and wished her well in her new role.

Councillor Taylor recommended the online and accessible regional scrutiny meetings to all the Council's scrutiny members to avoid duplication and share best practise.

Councillors Barnett, Stone, Powers and Huddart participated in the debate on the report and Councillor Ferguson's responses included the following:

- Scrutiny did act as a critical friend and challenge was a good part of the democratic process.
- Through scrutiny, members had the opportunity to work on a bipartisan and cross party basis to identify where better policy could be developed and delivered for residents.
- Councillor Ferguson reiterated the point that joining a scrutiny committee was an invaluable learning experience to understand how the Council worked.
- Regarding vacancies on scrutiny committees it had to be recognised that more voices around the table provided better scrutiny and encouraged all members to look at the opportunities that joining offered.
- The work that Councillor Lambert had recently done on a Task and Finish Group had been well received and this way of working could deliver meaningful change to the way the Council operated.
- Scrutiny had a particular statutory and legislative position but Councillor Ferguson said he was in favour of deepening and strengthening scrutiny in different ways. He was committed to ensuring that housing got the fullest possible scrutiny.
- Given that scrutiny in Newcastle was so well regarded, there was still a need to deepen engagement in the policy development process, to listen to the views of the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny and learning from best practice and to engage with residents and stakeholders to ensure that as many people as possible contribute to the scrutiny process.

**RESOLVED** – That Council agreed to receive the report.

## 68 APPOINTMENTS

Submitted: Report of the Service Manager Democratic Services (previously circulated and copy attached to the official minutes).

Councillor David Wood (Chair of Constitutional Committee) and Councillor Ellis (Vice Chair of Constitutional Committee) moved and seconded respectively the appointment of Councillor Karen Kilgour as Leader of the Council.

Councillor Wood paid tribute to former leader, Councillor Nick Kemp.

**RESOLVED** – Councillor Karen Kilgour was appointed as Leader of the Council.

The Lord Mayor asked if Council agreed the remaining appointments as set out.

**RESOLVED** – That Council approved the proposed changes to memberships.

## 69 NOTICE OF MOTION - VALUING OUR SENIOR CITIZENS

Following a discussion the Assistant Director Legal Services advised members that as items 11 and 12 were broadly on the same subject a single debate would deal with both although there would be separate votes on each.

In accordance with the notice previously given Councillor Huddart moved, seconded by Councillor Morrison, that:-

“Council acknowledges:

- that currently in Britain there are some 11.2 million citizens, of pensionable age
- the contribution our senior citizens have made to the growth and prosperity of both our city and country, along with the value their knowledge and experience has made to life, business and culture.
- that many of our senior citizens have had hard working lives, often on low wages with few privileges, yet have worked to contribute to a pension to support them in their later years
- that old age is often associated with a series of long term health conditions, some of which are exacerbated by cold and damp weather.
- the recent hikes in energy prices due to external factors prices , has affected all citizens, highlighting the value the Winter Fuel Allowance has made to senior and less able citizens

Council notes with concern:

- the decision in August 2024 by the Chancellor to cut the Winter Fuel Allowance for all except the citizens most financially disadvantaged and in receipt of means tested benefits.
- the suddenness of this decision, plus lack of discussion with other political parties, or the relevant voluntary and charitable sectors about this decision
- the response of agencies like Age UK who have condemned the cuts and stated that elderly people will have to make ‘Stark choices regarding heating this Winter.’ The Citizens Advice Bureaux response opposing the cuts, is that ‘This

action is not well targeted and may see energy bills rise to twice the pre-crisis levels’

- the Energy price cap is due to again be increased in October 2024

Council therefore resolves:

- to actively discuss with the relevant voluntary & charitable sectors in the City, the expected effects of the reductions in Winter Fuel Allowance; ways the situation may be relieved and communications made with media outlets to ensure the public is kept informed
- explore ways in which our older and less able citizens can be further supported to stay warm in winter months, with programmes for warm hubs, insulation, extra benefits etc
- to ask Cabinet to expand the programme to refit empty council properties, especially those for elderly to improve their energy efficiency and availability.
- to communicate with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, expressing great concern at the effects of these reductions in Winter Fuel Allowances, and the disconcerting effect this has had on our city’s pensioner population.
- to ensure this message is communicated with all the City’s MPs, the Regional Mayor and PCC”.

Councillor Morrissey reserved the right to speak to second the motion.

As an **amendment to item 11** (Councillor Huddart’s motion), Councillor Wright moved, seconded by Councillor Hay, that the Notice of Motion be amended by such deletions and/or insertions or additions as may be necessary so that the amended Motion would read:-

“Council acknowledges:

- That currently in Britain there are some 11.2 million citizens of pensionable age.
- The significant contribution our senior citizens have made to the growth and prosperity of both our city and country, along with the invaluable role their knowledge and experience have played in enriching life, business, and culture.
- That many of our senior citizens have had hard-working lives, often on low wages with few privileges, yet have contributed to a pension to support themselves in their later years.
- That old age is often associated with a series of long-term health conditions, some of which are exacerbated by cold and damp weather.
- The recent hikes in energy prices due to external factors, which have affected all citizens, further underscoring the importance of the Winter Fuel Allowance for senior and less able citizens.

Council notes:

- The decision in August 2024 by the Chancellor to cut the Winter Fuel Allowance for all except those in receipt of means-tested benefits, as part of a broader strategy to stabilise the economy.
- That while this decision reflects a necessary focus on long-term economic stability, it does highlight the need to increase the take up of those claiming means-tested benefits like Pension Credit and to find ways to support those who

are just above the threshold for means-tested benefits, who may struggle with rising energy costs this winter.

- The upcoming increase in the Energy Price Cap in October 2024, which will place further pressure on household budgets.

Council further acknowledges:

- That the difficult decisions being made now are aimed at addressing the economic instability inherited from previous governments, whose mismanagement led to a weakening of public finances and increased vulnerability to external economic shocks.

Council therefore resolves:

- To actively engage in discussions with relevant voluntary and charitable sectors in the City regarding the anticipated effects of the reductions in Winter Fuel Allowance, exploring ways to alleviate the situation and ensuring clear communication with media outlets to keep the public well-informed.
- To explore additional ways in which our older and less able citizens can be supported to stay warm during the winter months, including through the development of warm hubs, insulation programmes, and ensuring full uptake of available benefits such as Pension Credit.
- To ask Cabinet to launch a review of the programme to refit empty council properties, particularly those intended for elderly residents, to improve their energy efficiency and availability.
- To communicate with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, expressing concern at the impact of these reductions in Winter Fuel Allowances, and the anxiety this has caused among our city's pensioner population, while also acknowledging the broader economic context in which these decisions have been made.
- To ensure this message is communicated with all the City's MPs and Regional Mayor."

## **NOTICE OF MOTION - WITHDRAWAL OF WINTER FUEL ALLOWANCE**

In accordance with the notice previously given Councillor Marc Donnelly moved item 12 "**Notice of Motion – Withdrawal of the Winter Fuel Allowance**", seconded by Councillor Hartley that:

"Council notes that:

On 29 July 2024 the Chancellor Rachel Reeves announced in Parliament that pensioners, except for those in receipt of Pension Credit, will no longer receive the £300 payment to help with energy bills.

She told The Commons "Let me be clear, this is not a decision I wanted to make. She called the decision "The responsible thing to do". This will affect 10 million pensioners across the Country.

Recently Sir Keir Starmer, less than 2 months ago, speaking to Good Housekeeping Magazine stated "How awful and the biggest thing in the world is when people are unable to afford their heating bills".

Furthermore the new Chancellor tweeted in May 2017 "It is Labour who will stand up for pensioners defending the triple lock and winter fuel payments".

Just last month Darren Jones MP, now Chief Secretary to the Treasury, sent a letter to the Conservative Government asking them to reassure pensioners that they wouldn't means test winter fuel payments "pensioners mustn't be forced to bear the brunt of Tory economic failure".

He furthermore claimed "pensioners will be anxious about the news and noted sombrely how pensioners are already having to contend with dramatic increases in the cost of living". He went on to quote figures which showed how gas and electricity prices had spiked by 60% to 40% retrospectively since 2021. The question here is what has changed.

On 1 May 2024 Sir Keir Starmer asked whether the Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, would rule out taking pensioners winter fuel payments off them during Prime Minister's Questions.

The Country has been through much over recent years, a global pandemic, a cost of living crisis and a massive squeeze on personal finances. Pensioners do not have the means to top up their pension or work overtime, they have fixed incomes, which during the winter months costs increase significantly and savings diminish.

This is a cruel unnecessary decision and contrary to previous promises and commitments made prior to the election!

It is going to force pensioners between heating and eating and force many into poverty.

Council further notes that:

All the policies that the Council stands for, fairness, justice and equality. This decision by the Government needs to be reconsidered as it will have a lasting impact on the majority of households of pensionable age.

It will lead to households being left in the cold this winter, losing £300 which is the necessary support and lifeline for many, particularly as energy costs are still affecting many households and costs are nowhere near 2021.

Energy companies that were once state owned have made huge financial gains to shareholders during recent years whilst at the same time the majority of households have been facing serious hardship.

The Government has to realise that since 2021 the increase in essential goods has risen faster than household incomes, the cost of living crisis and the rise in inflation. It is estimated that household incomes will not return to pre-crisis levels until at least 2027.



Council believes that:

We should ask the Government to reconsider in the Autumn budget, on 30 October 2024. This is an unfair cut which will have a lasting detrimental effect. We owe our residents in Newcastle our support to help keep them warm and healthy this winter.

Council resolves to:

Write to Rachel Reeves, Chancellor, highlighting what one of her own Welsh Labour Ministers have said that the winter fuel change risks pensioner poverty hike.

Jane Hunt, the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, confessed that Rachel Reeves choice does risk hurting vulnerable older people. She wrote “The decision that the winter fuel payment would no longer be universal risks pushing some pensioners into fuel poverty”

None of us want pensioners to risk going cold or hungry this winter. The Chancellor must reconsider her decision instead of passing on the cost to the most vulnerable and those who have limited ability to increase their income.”

As an **amendment to item 12** (Councillor Donnelly’s motion), Councillor Wright moved, seconded by Councillor Hay, that the Notice of Motion be amended by such deletions and/or insertions or additions as may be necessary so that the amended Motion would read:-

“Council notes that:

- On 29 July 2024, the Chancellor Rachel Reeves announced in Parliament that pensioners, except for those in receipt of Pension Credit, will no longer receive the Winter Fuel Payment to help with energy bills.
- In her statement, the Chancellor emphasised that while this decision was challenging, it was made to ensure the sustainability of public finances and to focus resources on those most in need.
- Sir Keir Starmer has highlighted the ongoing challenges of the cost-of-living crisis, particularly for pensioners who are struggling with rising energy bills.
- The importance of supporting pensioners has been a consistent priority, with Labour previously committing to protecting the triple lock and winter fuel payments.
- The current economic context, including inflation and the rising cost of essential goods, continues to impact household finances, especially for those on fixed incomes like pensioners.

Council further acknowledges:

- The country has been through significant economic pressures, including the global pandemic and the ongoing cost of living crisis, which have particularly affected those on fixed incomes.
- Pensioners often have limited ability to increase their income, making them vulnerable to rising costs, especially during the winter months when energy use increases.
- While the decision to focus winter fuel payments on those receiving Pension Credit aims to target support to the most vulnerable, it is important to consider

the potential impact on those who do not qualify for this benefit but still face financial difficulties.

Council further notes that:

- The values of fairness, justice, and equality guide the Council's actions, and it is important to assess the impact of these changes on all pensioners, particularly those just above the threshold for means-tested benefits.
- The ongoing rise in energy costs and other living expenses means that many households are still facing significant financial challenges.

Council believes that:

- It is important to maintain a dialogue with the Government to ensure that the needs of all pensioners are considered, especially as we approach the winter months.
- We have a responsibility to support our residents in Newcastle, helping them to stay warm and healthy during the winter.

Council resolves to:

- Write to the Chancellor, Rachel Reeves, expressing the Council's concern about the potential impacts of the changes to the Winter Fuel Allowance, and urging further consideration of how best to support all pensioners during this time.
- Highlight the importance of continuing to monitor the situation to ensure that the most vulnerable are protected, and that no pensioner is left in hardship this winter.
- Continue to support local initiatives that assist our elderly residents in managing their energy costs and staying warm, including promoting the uptake of Pension Credit and other forms of assistance."

Councillors Lambert, Taylor, Mark Mitchell, Ferguson and Powers participated in the joint debate of the motions.

Councillor Christine Morrissey seconded item 11, Councillor Huddart's motion – Valuing our Senior Citizens.

## **SUSPENSION OF GUILLOTINE**

At this point, it was moved by Councillor Burns, and duly seconded, that Standing Order 19(b) (General Limit on Length of Meetings) (Guillotine) be suspended in accordance with Standing Order 27 to enable the remainder of the business to be dealt with.

**RESOLVED** – following a vote, the proposal to suspend Standing Orders fell with 29 votes in favour, 32 against and one abstention.

Councillor Ferguson called for a named vote on both motions and more than 10 members stood in support of the proposal.

**Following a named vote on the amendment to item 11**, the amendment was agreed with 31 in favour and 28 against.

In favour - Councillors Samad, Walker, Hay, Chisholm, Herridge, Penny-Evans, Greenhough, D Wood, Qureshi, I Ali, Kingsland, Sathian, Kilgour, Ellis, Storey, Hobson, Wright, M Wood, Williams, Sadiq, Barnett, Frew, Maines, Barry-Stanners, Lambert, Powers, Shatwell, Cairns, Fairlie, Anthony and Mafemba.

Against - Councillors Adam Mitchell, Avaei, Christine Morrissey, Ferguson, Burns, Kane, Rahman, Coles, Hall, Byrne, K Robinson, Musharraf, Marc Donnelly, Margaret Donnelly, Mark Mitchell, Pauline Allen, Joanne, Cookson, Lovatt, Browne, Austin, Ashby, Tracey Mitchell, Taylor, Hartley, Stone, Huddart and PJ Morrissey.

Following a named vote on the motion as amended, the motion was carried with 32 votes in favour and 29 abstentions.

Abstained - Councillors Adam Mitchell, Avaei, Christine Morrissey, Ferguson, Burns, Kane, Rahman, Coles, Byrne, Hall, K Robinson, Musharraf, Marc Donnelly, Margaret Donnelly, Mark Mitchell, Pauline Allen, Joanne, Peter Allen, Cookson, Lovatt, Browne, Austin, Ashby, Tracey Mitchell, Taylor, PJ Morrissey, Stone, Huddart and Hartley.

In favour - Councillors Samad, Walker, Hay, Chisholm, Herridge, Penny-Evans, Greenhough, D Wood, Qureshi, I Ali, Kingsland, Sathian, Kilgour, Ellis, Storey, Hobson, Wright, M Wood, Williams, Sadiq, Barnett, Frew, Maines, Barry-Stanners, Lambert, Fairlie, N Ali, Anthony, Cairns, Mafemba, Shatwell and Powers.

**RESOLVED** – “Council acknowledges:

- That currently in Britain there are some 11.2 million citizens of pensionable age.
- The significant contribution our senior citizens have made to the growth and prosperity of both our city and country, along with the invaluable role their knowledge and experience have played in enriching life, business, and culture.
- That many of our senior citizens have had hard-working lives, often on low wages with few privileges, yet have contributed to a pension to support themselves in their later years.
- That old age is often associated with a series of long-term health conditions, some of which are exacerbated by cold and damp weather.
- The recent hikes in energy prices due to external factors, which have affected all citizens, further underscoring the importance of the Winter Fuel Allowance for senior and less able citizens.

Council notes:

- The decision in August 2024 by the Chancellor to cut the Winter Fuel Allowance for all except those in receipt of means-tested benefits, as part of a broader strategy to stabilise the economy.
- That while this decision reflects a necessary focus on long-term economic stability, it does highlight the need to increase the take up of those claiming means-tested benefits like Pension Credit and to find ways to support those who are just above the threshold for means-tested benefits, who may struggle with rising energy costs this winter.

- The upcoming increase in the Energy Price Cap in October 2024, which will place further pressure on household budgets.

Council further acknowledges:

- That the difficult decisions being made now are aimed at addressing the economic instability inherited from previous governments, whose mismanagement led to a weakening of public finances and increased vulnerability to external economic shocks.

Council therefore resolves:

- To actively engage in discussions with relevant voluntary and charitable sectors in the City regarding the anticipated effects of the reductions in Winter Fuel Allowance, exploring ways to alleviate the situation and ensuring clear communication with media outlets to keep the public well-informed.
- To explore additional ways in which our older and less able citizens can be supported to stay warm during the winter months, including through the development of warm hubs, insulation programmes, and ensuring full uptake of available benefits such as Pension Credit.
- To ask Cabinet to launch a review of the programme to refit empty council properties, particularly those intended for elderly residents, to improve their energy efficiency and availability.
- To communicate with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, expressing concern at the impact of these reductions in Winter Fuel Allowances, and the anxiety this has caused among our city's pensioner population, while also acknowledging the broader economic context in which these decisions have been made.
- To ensure this message is communicated with all the City's MPs and Regional Mayor."

**Following a vote on the motion as amendment to item 12** the amended motion was carried with 32 votes in favour and 29 against.

Against - Councillors Adam Mitchell, Avaei, Christine Morrissey, Ferguson, Burns, Kane, Rahman, Coles, Byrne, Hall, K Robinson, Musharraf, Marc Donnelly, Margaret Donnelly, Mark Mitchell, Pauline Allen, Joanne, Peter Allen, Cookson, Lovatt, Browne, Austin, Ashby, Tracey Mitchell, Taylor, PJ Morrissey, Stone, Huddart and Hartley.

In favour - Councillors Samad, Walker, Hay, Chisholm, Herridge, Penny-Evans, Greenhough, D Wood, Qureshi, I Ali, Kingsland, Sathian, Kilgour, Ellis, Storey, Hobson, Wright, M Wood, Williams, Sadiq, Barnett, Frew, Maines, Barry-Stanners, Lambert, Fairlie, N Ali, Anthony, Cairns, Mafemba, Shatwell and Powers.

Following a named vote on the motion as amended, the motion was carried with 32 votes in favour and 29 abstentions.

Abstained - Councillors Adam Mitchell, Avaei, Christine Morrissey, Ferguson, Burns, Kane, Rahman, Coles, Byrne, Hall, K Robinson, Musharraf, Marc Donnelly, Margaret Donnelly, Mark Mitchell, Pauline Allen, Joanne, Peter Allen, Cookson,

Lovatt, Browne, Austin, Ashby, Tracey Mitchell, Taylor, PJ Morrissey, Stone, Huddart and Hartley.

In favour - Councillors Samad, Walker, Hay, Chisholm, Herridge, Penny-Evans, Greenhough, D Wood, Qureshi, I Ali, Kingsland, Sathian, Kilgour, Ellis, Storey, Hobson, Wright, M Wood, Williams, Sadiq, Barnett, Frew, Maines, Barry-Stanners, Lambert, Fairlie, N Ali, Anthony, Cairns, Mafemba, Shatwell and Powers.

**RESOLVED** – “Council notes that:

- On 29 July 2024, the Chancellor Rachel Reeves announced in Parliament that pensioners, except for those in receipt of Pension Credit, will no longer receive the Winter Fuel Payment to help with energy bills.
- In her statement, the Chancellor emphasised that while this decision was challenging, it was made to ensure the sustainability of public finances and to focus resources on those most in need.
- Sir Keir Starmer has highlighted the ongoing challenges of the cost-of-living crisis, particularly for pensioners who are struggling with rising energy bills.
- The importance of supporting pensioners has been a consistent priority, with Labour previously committing to protecting the triple lock and winter fuel payments.
- The current economic context, including inflation and the rising cost of essential goods, continues to impact household finances, especially for those on fixed incomes like pensioners.

Council further acknowledges:

- The country has been through significant economic pressures, including the global pandemic and the ongoing cost of living crisis, which have particularly affected those on fixed incomes.
- Pensioners often have limited ability to increase their income, making them vulnerable to rising costs, especially during the winter months when energy use increases.
- While the decision to focus winter fuel payments on those receiving Pension Credit aims to target support to the most vulnerable, it is important to consider the potential impact on those who do not qualify for this benefit but still face financial difficulties.

Council further notes that:

- The values of fairness, justice, and equality guide the Council's actions, and it is important to assess the impact of these changes on all pensioners, particularly those just above the threshold for means-tested benefits.
- The ongoing rise in energy costs and other living expenses means that many households are still facing significant financial challenges.

Council believes that:

- It is important to maintain a dialogue with the Government to ensure that the needs of all pensioners are considered, especially as we approach the winter months.

- We have a responsibility to support our residents in Newcastle, helping them to stay warm and healthy during the winter.

Council resolves to:

- Write to the Chancellor, Rachel Reeves, expressing the Council's concern about the potential impacts of the changes to the Winter Fuel Allowance, and urging further consideration of how best to support all pensioners during this time.
- Highlight the importance of continuing to monitor the situation to ensure that the most vulnerable are protected, and that no pensioner is left in hardship this winter.
- Continue to support local initiatives that assist our elderly residents in managing their energy costs and staying warm, including promoting the uptake of Pension Credit and other forms of assistance."

## 70 **NOTICE OF MOTION - RIGHT TO GARDEN**

Councillor Kane indicated to the Lord Mayor that this item be dealt with at this meeting and put to the vote without discussion.

In accordance with the notice previously given Councillor Kane moved, seconded by Councillor Ashby, that:-

"Council notes that:

- residents of medium and high rise buildings often have no access to space to garden
- it is well understood that gardening brings with it many mental & physical health benefits, plus wider social and environmental benefits.
- the city's allotments are over-subscribed, fenced off from the public and most are too large for people with a busy lifestyle.
- the Council declared itself a Co-operative Council but a co-operative approach to green space is rarely manifested in practice (with the notable exception of parks' 'Friends of' groups)
- many residents of Council properties have resorted to guerrilla gardening on their estates, often with impressive results, but risk having their work destroyed during estate maintenance.

Council believes:

- we should be encouraging and facilitating gardening across the city wherever practical
- that the current project in Battlefield to plot the location of residents' garden plots on Council estates should be used a pilot for a City-wide scheme.

Council resolves to ask Cabinet to:

- adopt a general 'right to garden' policy, with a presumption in favour of residents' gardening projects
- monitor the Battlefield project as a pilot.

- develop suitable guidelines, an ‘adopt a plot’-style system of recording gardened areas, and annual checks to determine whether they are still being maintained.”

As an **amendment**, Councillor Williams moved, seconded by Councillor Greenhough, that the Notice of Motion be amended by such deletions and/or insertions or additions as may be necessary so that the amended Motion would read:-

“Council notes that:

- The health and well-being of residents is at the heart of everything that we do and is reflected in our corporate strategies.
- Residents of medium, high-rise buildings and terraces often have no access to space to garden and grow their own food.
- There is powerful evidence which demonstrates the link between people’s health and wellbeing and the availability of fresh locally produced food. It is well understood that gardening brings with it many mental & physical health benefits, plus wider social and environmental benefits.
- There are 60 allotment sites in the city, mainly managed by Urban Green. Overall, the number of plots on sites across the city is approximately 3300. Through the planning process, the Council continues to secure additional allotment provision.
- If publicly owned land was to be used for community food growing and improving the public realm additional resources would be required.
- The Council is a Co-operative Council, and that a co-operative approach to green space can benefit residents and allow community groups to come together to garden and grow food.
- Some residents have undertaken ‘guerrilla gardening’ on their estates, but risk having their work damaged during estate maintenance. Some community groups have adopted unused land and created green spaces.

Council believes:

- We should be encouraging and facilitating gardening and growing food across the city wherever practical.
- That the Landscape Team are working with a project in Battlefield to map community garden areas. This project could be expanded but would need budget and resources to ensure a one council approach.

Council recognises that:

- The Council has limited budget and resources to carry out additional recording and checking. This needs to be assessed alongside other cost pressures and growth priorities.
- The Council currently has a policy which requires open space and allotments. Through our Planning framework we ensure that we positively plan for the provision and use of shared spaces and community facilities including open space and allotments. Our current planning policy requires that as part of any new development, development is required to provide open space and on sites where this isn’t possible, to improve existing facilities in the area. Therefore, we have a policy that requires that open spaces such as gardens and allotments is provided in the city. We will continue to work with our communities to manage our open spaces across the city.

Council resolves to:

- monitor the Battlefield project as a pilot.”

Upon a vote, the **amendment was carried** with 32 votes in favour and 27 against. The amendment was carried as the substantive motion.

**RESOLVED** – Council notes that:

- The health and well-being of residents is at the heart of everything that we do and is reflected in our corporate strategies.
- Residents of medium, high-rise buildings and terraces often have no access to space to garden and grow their own food.
- There is powerful evidence which demonstrates the link between people’s health and wellbeing and the availability of fresh locally produced food. It is well understood that gardening brings with it many mental & physical health benefits, plus wider social and environmental benefits.
- There are 60 allotment sites in the city, mainly managed by Urban Green. Overall, the number of plots on sites across the city is approximately 3300. Through the planning process, the Council continues to secure additional allotment provision.
- If publicly owned land was to be used for community food growing and improving the public realm additional resources would be required.
- The Council is a Co-operative Council, and that a co-operative approach to green space can benefit residents and allow community groups to come together to garden and grow food.
- Some residents have undertaken ‘guerrilla gardening’ on their estates, but risk having their work damaged during estate maintenance. Some community groups have adopted unused land and created green spaces.

Council believes:

- We should be encouraging and facilitating gardening and growing food across the city wherever practical.
- That the Landscape Team are working with a project in Battlefield to map community garden areas. This project could be expanded but would need budget and resources to ensure a one council approach.

Council recognises that:

- The Council has limited budget and resources to carry out additional recording and checking. This needs to be assessed alongside other cost pressures and growth priorities.
- The Council currently has a policy which requires open space and allotments. Through our Planning framework we ensure that we positively plan for the provision and use of shared spaces and community facilities including open space and allotments. Our current planning policy requires that as part of any new development, development is required to provide open space and on sites where this isn’t possible, to improve existing facilities in the area. Therefore, we have a policy that requires that open spaces such as gardens and allotments is provided in the city. We will continue to work with our communities to manage our open spaces across the city.

Council resolves to:

- monitor the Battlefield project as a pilot.”



71 **NOTICE OF MOTION - NECA AND THE NORTH EAST'S ECONOMIC STRATEGY**

Councillor Stone indicated to the Lord Mayor that this item would be **deferred** until the next meeting of Council.

72 **NOTICE OF MOTION - LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT**

Councillor Ferguson indicated to the Lord Mayor that this item be dealt with at this meeting and put to the vote without discussion. He also advised the Lord Mayor that if the amendment was carried he intended to submit a further amendment to the substantive motion as amended.

The Assistant Director Legal Services confirmed that this was permissible under Standing Order 16e, which allowed for an amendment to be moved without notice.

Councillor Ferguson advised that the verbal amendment would be to the final bullet point under "Council believes" be amended to as follows, "If austerity was a choice made by successive Conservative and Liberal Democrat MPs over the past 14 years, then it was a choice being continued by Labour MPs".

In accordance with the notice previously given Councillor Ferguson moved, seconded by Councillor Mark Mitchell, that:-

"Council notes:

- that Newcastle City Council faces a calculated funding gap of £437m by 2027-28, relative to a 2010-11 baseline, the vast majority arising from cost pressures, including inflation;
- that the total council tax bill for a Band D property in Newcastle, including precepts, has increased by just over 51% in the last ten years, outstripping inflation over the same period of approximately 34%, as the Revenue Support Grant has dwindled;
- that the Government has yet to provide much needed certainty on the long-term future of a range of funding pots supporting the delivery of Council priorities;
- that it is speculated that the single person council tax discount could be axed by the Labour Government in Whitehall, forcing councils to charge the full amount of council tax to people living alone.

Council believes:

- that the funding landscape for local government remains perilous, with many councils finding it increasingly difficult even to provide statutory services, let alone discretionary activity, with the money available;
- that an over-reliance on regularly hiking council tax rates by the maximum allowable is not a sustainable, equitable or fair means of generating the necessary income to deliver council services;
- that austerity is a choice.

Council resolves to:

- write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to:
  - call for a fair finance settlement for local authorities in the October budget;
  - call for a multi-year settlement that enables councils to plan for the future;
  - demand that this settlement provides sufficient core funding to end the over-reliance on council tax;
- lobby the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government to initiate urgent reforms to the council tax system, and to move towards a more progressive, equitable system.”

As an **amendment** Councillor Frew moved, seconded by Councillor Kilgour that the Notice of Motion be amended by such deletions and/or insertions or additions as may be necessary so that the amended Motion would read:-

“Council notes:

- That Newcastle City Council faces a calculated funding gap of £437m by 2027-28, relative to a 20210-11 baseline, the vast majority arising from cost pressures, including inflation;
- That the total council tax bill for a Band D property in Newcastle, including precepts, has increased by just over 51% in the last ten years, outstripping inflation over the same period of approximately 34%. Sources of central funding have been cut significantly more in this period;
- Newcastle households are charged the 13<sup>th</sup> lowest council tax per household in England and Wales;
- Council tax only accounts for one fifth of the Council’s revenue
- That the Government has yet to provide much needed certainty on the long-term future of a range of funding pots supporting the delivery of Council priorities;

Council believes:

- That the funding landscape for local government remains perilous, with many councils finding it increasingly difficult even to provide statutory services, let alone discretionary activity, with the money available;
- That the current arrangements for funding local government is not a sustainable, equitable or fair means of generating the necessary income to deliver council services;
- That austerity is a choice made by successive Conservative and Liberal Democrat MPs over the past 14 years.

Council resolves to:

- Receive copies of the already substantial lobbying efforts by the Leader of Council, Association of North East Councils, and SIGOMA in relation to local government finance of this year;
- Continue to lobby the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government to initiate reforms to the local government finance, and to move towards a more progressive, equitable system.”

Upon a vote, the **amendment was carried** with 33 votes in favour and 28 against. The amendment was carried as the substantive motion.

In accordance with Standing Order 16e, Councillor Ferguson moved an amendment (duly seconded) to the final bullet point under “Council believes” to read “If austerity was a choice made by successive Conservative and Liberal Democrat MPs over the past 14 years, then it was a choice being continued by Labour MPs”.

Upon a vote, Councillor Ferguson’s **verbal amendment was lost** with 33 votes in favour and 28 against.

**RESOLVED** – That the motion, as amended by Councillor Frew was carried as the substantive motion.

Council notes:

- That Newcastle City Council faces a calculated funding gap of £437m by 2027-28, relative to a 20210-11 baseline, the vast majority arising from cost pressures, including inflation;
- That the total council tax bill for a Band D property in Newcastle, including precepts, has increased by just over 51% in the last ten years, outstripping inflation over the same period of approximately 34%. Sources of central funding have been cut significantly more in this period;
- Newcastle households are charged the 13<sup>th</sup> lowest council tax per household in England and Wales;
- Council tax only accounts for one fifth of the Council’s revenue
- That the Government has yet to provide much needed certainty on the long-term future of a range of funding pots supporting the delivery of Council priorities;

Council believes:

- That the funding landscape for local government remains perilous, with many councils finding it increasingly difficult even to provide statutory services, let alone discretionary activity, with the money available;
- That the current arrangements for funding local government is not a sustainable, equitable or fair means of generating the necessary income to deliver council services;
- That austerity is a choice made by successive Conservative and Liberal Democrat MPs over the past 14 years.

Council resolves to:

- Receive copies of the already substantial lobbying efforts by the Leader of Council, Association of North East Councils, and SIGOMA in relation to local government finance of this year;
- Continue to lobby the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government to initiate reforms to the local government finance, and to move towards a more progressive, equitable system.

## 73 NOTICE OF MOTION - COMPASSION IN POLITICS

Councillor Hartley indicated to the Lord Mayor that this item would be **deferred** until the next meeting of Council.

74 **NOTICE OF MOTION - INDEPENDENT INQUIRY**

Councillor Ferguson indicated to the Lord Mayor that this item would be **deferred** until the next meeting of Council.