

BOROUGH COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 16 MAY 2024

BOROUGH COUNCIL

A meeting of the Borough Council was held on Thursday, 16 May 2024 in the Civic Centre, Ridley Street, Redcar, Yorkshire, TS10 1TD.

PRESENT His Worshipful the Mayor (Councillor M Head),
Councillors I Attwood, N Bendelow, P Berry, A Brook,
A Brown, C Cawley, R Clark, B Clarke, P Chaney,
J Craven, G Cutler, C Curr, U Earl, K Evans, M Fairley,
M Fletcher, P Grogan, C Hannaway, N Hargreaves,
I Hart, J Hart, B Hunt, J Joy, S Kay, K King, T Learoyd,
S Martin, C Massey, J McCue, P McInnes, C Morgan,
L Myer, J Neal, M O'Donoghue, A Oliver, M Ovens,
L Pallister, C Pugh, C Quartermain, C Richardson,
V Rider, L Robson L Rynn, P Salvin, Stuart Smith,
B Suthers, J Symon and P Thomson.

OFFICIALS B Archer, E Dale, S Newton, A Pearson,
P Rice, J Sampson, C Styles and P Winstanley.

Death in Service

The Mayor announced the sad death of Christopher Sigsworth. Christopher was employed in Children's Services as a School Crossing Patrol Officer. Christopher started his employment with the Council on 23 February 2009, he was 64 years old.

Members joined in a minute's silence as a mark of respect.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were submitted on behalf of Councillors W Davies, T Gray, G Jeffery, C Jones, J Lavan, G Nightingale, D Powlay, D Taylor, J Thompson and L White.

80 **To receive Declarations of Interest.**

Councillor Rider declared an interest in all matters relating to Saltburn, Marske and New Marske Parish Council.

81 **To confirm the accuracy of the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 April 2024.**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 11 April be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

Councillor Thomson requested that Members receive a full explanation of the advice given by the Monitoring Officer to the Mayor which meant that a notice without motion which he considered to have met all the requirements in the Constitution was not allowed.

82 **To note the attendance matrix from the last meeting**

RESOLVED that the attendance matrix be noted.

83 **To receive any Announcements from the Mayor, the Leader of the Council or Cabinet Members.**

The Mayor thanked Members who attended his charity ball which had raised over £6000.

He advised that this would be his last time chairing the full Council meeting as Mayor, and he thanked everyone for their support and hoped that he had been an impartial Chairman throughout the meetings.

Leader's Announcements.

I'm sure members will be concerned about the announcement by Anglo American yesterday that it will slow the development of the Woodsmith Project to reduce cash expenditure.

The budget for Woodsmith will be reduced significantly and although some work will continue, it will be very different for the rest of this year and the coming two years.

Anglo says it is still committed to the project and hopes to restart construction in the future.

However, this is a very worrying time for staff on the project and anyone involved in future developments tied in with the mine.

Woodsmith has also backed many projects in our communities and we wait to see what will happen with this investment.

I have met with the company about the announcement. The Council has been very supportive to the Woodsmith Project and it would be in everybody's interests for the mine to be completed and successful.

I will continue to seek answers and update members once I have more information.

Thousands of spectators came out to watch elite cyclists take on the East Cleveland Classic last month.

The weather was kind and the event showcased the beauty of our borough to cycling fans across the country.

We now look forward to hosting the Tour of Britain race next month.

Council staff have once again improved the quality of life for residents by successfully applying for a problem house in South Bank to be closed.

Magistrates approved the eviction of tenants after hearing reports of

fights with machetes, drug dealing and stolen goods.

Our staff worked with Cleveland Police and Beyond Housing to bring the successful application and this is another example of positive work to improve our borough.

Work has started on a new Employment and Skills Hub in Loftus.

The aim of the project, at Temperance Square, is to reduce unemployment numbers within Loftus and wider East Cleveland, encourage new business start-ups and increase the number of training and skills courses on offer.

Next week, demolition work will start on the former Marks and Spencer and Goodwins buildings in Redcar town centre.

Internal works have been happening for several months but now the external buildings will be brought down, followed by the construction of a new venue for family-friendly entertainment.

Four new rapid response crews have been deployed to keep our borough clean and tidy and respond to urgent repairs and maintenance.

Starting this summer, the crews will help improve efficiency and response times across the area and allow the teams responsible for routine maintenance to focus on the work that's scheduled.

When not responding to incidents they will also carry out ongoing maintenance and repair work.

The Council has launched a new initiative to support and encourage volunteering in our borough.

We already have many people who give up their time to improve where they live and a new survey is asking for residents' experiences of volunteering and how they can be supported to volunteer in the future.

The results of the survey will then help us to remove barriers to volunteering and support residents who wish to volunteer.

A member task and finish group is closely involved in the project and I look forward to this work providing an excellent service to residents.

Finally, following months of negotiations, the Council has finalised an option to lease the former Coatham Bowl site for the development of a 5,000-capacity arena.

It has been a complex procedure, ensuring the Council does not carry the financial risk from the project, but we now look forward to the developers delivering what they have promised.

- 84 **To receive any Announcements from the Managing Director (Head of Paid Service).**

There were no announcements from the Managing Director.

- 85 **To consider Questions from the Public for which Notice has been given.**

No questions had been received from Members of the Public.

- 86 **To consider and agree any Reports from the Cabinet and the Council's Committees.**

Children in our Care and Care Leavers Update Report.

The Cabinet Member for Children updated Members on the work undertaken by the Council's Children in our Care and Care Resources Service.

RESOLVED that on the successful motion of Councillor Suthers and duly seconded by Councillor Brown that the information in the report be noted.

- 87 **To receive Reports from Portfolio Holders.**

Report of the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods.

Councillor Brook presented a report which gave an update on his portfolio and answered Members' questions in relation to it: **-NOTED.**

- 88 **To consider Motions.**

MOVED by Councillor Grogan and duly seconded by Councillor Hargreaves:

I would like to see a commitment to have more litter bins across the Borough, especially at places like the Kirkleatham showground and woods (a keen place for dog walkers) which currently has none, in addition to approximately 1000 bins which we already have in place to keep our beautiful Borough clean and tidy. This should always be a top priority for the Council.

Although the Council is experiencing budget issues, I believe the provision of more bins will help to reduce the amount of littering in the Borough and the costs of dealing with that problem.

Any extra bins, however, will only help solve the problem of litter if they are regularly emptied and maintained, and the area around the bin is cleared.

Bins can fill up quickly, particularly in popular tourist locations and can be

damaged for a variety of reasons. Providing a simple system for allowing the public to report full or damaged bins will help the Council respond quickly and effectively to keep these facilities available for public use.

A scheme similar to that used by North Tyneside Council, Glasgow City Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council would have a relatively low cost set up, and would help to effectively manage litter bin collections, especially in our summer months when the Borough sees a spike in visitors.

Accordingly, this Council recommends to Cabinet that it investigates the provision of additional bins where evidence suggests they are needed and considers the introduction of a scheme, using existing technology, to assist the public in reporting full or damaged bins, including:

- Attaching unique QR code stickers to the bins which can be scanned with a smartphone and will identify the exact location of the bin;
- Linking these to the Council's "Bins and waste services" section on its website and, if possible, providing information on when the bin is next due to be emptied, thereby avoiding the need to report a bin that is due to be emptied the same or next day; and
- Regular updates being provided to Elected Members on progress to monitor how the scheme is working.

If implemented the QR technology could have more possibilities in the future to streamline our services to include other assets such as, if there are any issues with benches, broken children's play apparatus, bus shelter damage, even streetlights if the lights aren't working. We must be open to ideas that help the Council be as efficient as possible, with the help of residents and visitor engagement, all starting with a picture on a smartphone.

AMENDMENT MOVED by Councillor Brook and duly seconded by Councillor Brown that:-

I would like to see a commitment to have more litter bins across the Borough, especially at places like the Kirkleatham showground and woods (a keen place for dog walkers) which currently has none, in addition to approximately 1000 bins which we already have in place to keep our beautiful Borough clean and tidy. This should always be a top priority for the Council.

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A scheme similar to that used by North Tyneside Council, Glasgow City Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council would have a relatively low cost set up, and would help to effectively manage litter bin collections, especially in our summer months when the Borough sees a spike in visitors.

Accordingly, this Council recommends to Cabinet that it continues to review the provision of additional bins where evidence suggest that they were needed and will investigate the possibilities and of introducing a scheme, using existing technology, to assist the public in reporting full or damaged bins, including

Attaching unique QR code stickers to the bins which can be scanned with a smartphone and will identify the exact location of the bin;

- Linking these to the Council's "Bins and waste services" section on its website and, if possible, providing information on when the bin is next due to be emptied, thereby avoiding the need to report a bin that is due to be emptied the same or next day; and
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If implemented the QR technology could have more possibilities in the future to streamline our services to include other assets such as, if there are any issues with benches, broken children's play apparatus, bus shelter damage, even streetlights if the lights aren't working. We must be open to ideas that help the Council be as efficient as possible, with the help of residents and visitor engagement, all starting with a picture on a smartphone.

With the agreement of the proposers and seconders of the motion and the amendment and the meeting both the amendment and the original motion were withdrawn.

RESOLVED that a Task and Finish Group be set up to investigate the issues raised by the Motion.

89 **To appoint Members.**

There were no changes to Committee places to report:-**NOTED.**

90 **To reply to Questions from Members of the Council.**

Q1. Question from Councillor Kay to Councillor Earl, Cabinet Member for Health and Welfare.

“When individuals, businesses or charities provide defibrillators on Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council’s buildings or land, don’t you, as the responsible Cabinet Member, believe that this Council has a duty to keep them in workable order by providing regular services, checks and maintenance?”

Councillor Earl replied as follows:-

The installation of Community Public Access Defibrillators (cPAD) are funded and arranged by members of community groups, Parish Councils’ and charitable organisations. Following the installation of a cPAD, there is a requirement for a named guardian to carryout regular inspections to the equipment and cabinet once a week. This person will also be contacted if the device has been activated, check the machine and order replacement parts.

When the Council are contacted regarding the installation of a cPAD, we will always work with the groups, supporting them in improving safety within their communities. However, this is on the understanding the relevant groups continue to maintain and monitor the use of the cPADs in their community.

Separate defibrillators are held within public facing Council buildings which are maintained and monitored by Council teams which would be made available for any building user or member of the public.

So to answer your question I do not believe that the Council does have a duty to keep these cPADs in workable order by providing regular services, checks and maintenance and this duty falls to the named guardian for those cPADs.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Kay:-

“Lingdale Community Centre is old and run by this Council but the defibrillator in full view, next to the front door, is neither checked nor serviced by anyone. This Council is wrong to believe that it is looked after by Lockwood Parish Council. I have rung the Clerk twice and been reassured that it is not their responsibility and was not put there by the Parish Council.

If someone suffers cardiac arrest on Lingdale High Street and dies because of lack of maintenance and this defibrillator fails, the finger of blame, and rightly so, will be pointed towards this penny pinching Council. Should not Redcar and Cleveland Council keep all defibrillators on its buildings and land fully checked and serviced to afford continuous life saving protection at minimal cost to its citizens.”

Councillor Earl replied as follows:-

“I have information about that particular defibrillator in Lingdale, As I have already said these cPADs have to be registered and I have been told that this cPAD is not registered and we cannot therefore cannot trace who the guardian is but we will look at either removing that cPAD or carrying out further investigations to find out who the guardian is and who originally installed that particular piece of apparatus. In terms of Lingdale High Street I understand that there is also a cPAD outside Lingdale pharmacy.”

Q2. Question from Councillor Grogan to Councillor Earl, Cabinet Member for Health and Welfare.

“The Women's Rough Sleeping Census Report, the first of its kind in England, aims to give a more accurate picture of what women's rough sleeping looks like in the UK.

Solace Women's Aid has worked in coalition with Single Homeless Project, London Councils and Homeless Link to deliver the first national census into the scale of women's homelessness. For the first time councils from across England came together to undertake gender informed outreach to understand the number of women rough sleeping and how their experiences differ from men.

The new report estimates there could be "nine times" more women sleeping rough in England than official government data suggests.

The census, published on Tuesday 7th May, found more homeless women in 41 local authority areas than the government's official annual snapshot data recorded in the whole of England in 2023.

None of the local authorities in the North-East took part in the census, charities behind the report have urged councils in the North-East and North Yorkshire to get involved in the next census, September 2024.

See link to report:

<https://www.solacewomensaid.org/first-national-census-of-women-sleeping-rough-reveals-gender-bias-in-government-costs-and-rough-sleeping-policy/>

Was the council asked to be involved with this census?”

Councillor Earl replied as follows:

“The short answer is no we have investigated this and we had not received a request to participate in the survey. I read the survey myself and had a look at it and it appears that a lot of London Boroughs were

contacted, Boroughs in the South of England, some in the Midlands and in Greater Manchester but I am not sure that any in the North East were contacted and we certainly were not.

We are fortunate in this Borough that we do not have a large number of rough sleepers, but I absolutely agree with you that one rough sleeper is too many and one vulnerable rough sleeper is certainly many too many. I want to reassure you that in terms of the priority needs for Housing Assessment a pregnant woman or a person with whom she resides, or might reasonably be expected to reside, will be assessed on a priority need. Also a person with whom dependent children reside, which could be a female again, a person who is homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse will have priority need for housing. The short answer to your question is yes we would very much like to be involved in the census and also learn from the information that is shared and also with what other Councils do and thank you for your question.”

Q3. Question from Councillor Martin to Councillor Brook, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods:

“I, like most of our fellow councillors and residents are sick and tired of illegal and dangerous parking within Redcar and Cleveland. When reporting to enforcement we are told that officers will attend but it's often too late.

When speaking to the team I was shocked to learn that there are only 12 enforcement officers in the whole of Redcar and Cleveland which means there are 4 – 8 staff on duty at any one time. Enforcement deals with everything from parking, fly tipping, littering, dog fouling, untaxed vehicles and certain anti-social behaviour.

How can this small team deal with the pressures we put on them and offer the service that our residents deserve? This is the only service which theoretically pays for itself through revenue raised by issuing fines.

No matter which Ward I am in throughout the day, I will see 10 - 20 cars daily parked on yellows lines. This is potentially £700 - £1400 a day in lost revenue (a fine for parking on double yellow lines is £70).

Investment in additional enforcement officers will more than likely pay for itself in the revenue raised for the council, in turn keeping our streets safer and our residents happy.

Will the Cabinet consider increasing the number of enforcement officers so that we can improve services for our residents and at the same time, increase revenue for the Council?”

Councillor Brook replied as follows:-

“We do have a very dedicated enforcement team that are covering a

number of issues including parking, fly tipping, littering, dog fouling and community patrols. The income derived from enforcement activities does not cover the full cost of operating this team, it contributes approximately a third of the overall expenditure.

A full cost recovery model has been operated by some other Local Authorities and private sector enforcement companies which drives a different approach and culture within those organisations. Income generation becomes the prime concern, with targets given to enforcement officers, and activities focused only on areas where large numbers of fines are likely to be secured. This approach can result in a lot of negative publicity when it becomes apparent that the key objective is to generate income rather than educate and change behaviours.

The council will continue to look at external funding opportunities to help bolster the resources that we have available, and we will continue to work with other partners to address areas of concern as effectively as possible.”

Supplementary Question from Councillor Martin:-

“I would prefer us not to fine people for parking illegally I prefer everyone to park legally but unfortunately it does happen. There just is not the Officers there to deal with the situation. There was one occasion last month where the Enforcement Officers were in Eston for about an hour and eleven fines were handed out so there is money to be made and there is education to get out there but we need to do more than we are actually doing now. I understand the pressures on the Council but we need to do more to make our roads safer.”

Councillor Brook replied a follows:-

“Yes, I agree but with financial pressures, resource funding that has been withdrawn from the Council I know in the past has directly impacted on enforcement but you are right it is about education and behaviours. It is not a money-making scheme and we need to get it right but we will look at it and work forward.”

Q4. Question from Councillor Learoyd to the Leader of the Council.

“At the last full council, in response to my question, you spoke of the Teesworks' lawyers advising against a veto to stop the PD Ports' court case, which the taxpayer ultimately, and predictably, lost.

Your decision not to veto cost the taxpayer upwards of £3.25M.

Why were you following advice from a Teesworks' lawyer, and did you consult independent advice before your dreadful and wrong decision?”

Councillor Brown replied as follows:-

“I would just like to remind the entire Council that I asked (although it was not minuted and I spoke to Julie Gilhespie) that they negotiate at all cost but I refuse to answer anymore questions from Councillor Learoyd on a couple of points of Code of Conduct. Over the last week on social media he has claimed that I spend my time apologising to Ben Houchen. He has also claimed in this building on a video that the Labour and Conservative Group have come to a deal to remove him from the Chair of Planning. I would like to confirm with the Conservatives today that no such thing has taken place has it? So please apologise publicly for misinforming the public and I will answer your question.”

Supplementary Question from Councillor Learoyd:-

“I still have not had the answer to my first question which was why did you not seek independent advice with regards to the PD Ports case or even use your veto to prevent that loss because there are five Labour councillor Leaders who have opportunity to scrutinise.”

Councillor Brown replied as follows:-

“I refuse to answer any more questions from this particular Councillor until I have a public apology or evidence to show that we have done a deal.”

Q5. Question from Councillor Ovens to Councillor Richardson, Cabinet Member for Climate and Culture.

“Can the Cabinet Member commit to the 15000 residents of East Redcar, in regard to the Library building at 338 Laburnum Road, and advise which of the current full RCBC services will be available, and that the new opening hours will mirror the current opening offer over 5 days a week once the building is taken over?”

Councillor Richardson replied as follows:-

“The question is a bit misleading because the current offer is that it is open two days a week and it is closed five days a week but what I can say is that as a Council we are absolutely committed to providing an excellent library service to the residents of the borough despite facing severe financial pressures.

A number of fantastic community groups have expressed an interest in running Laburnum Road Library and it is expected that with this community support, the building will actually be busier with a variety of new uses and group activity right at the heart of the community.

Officers are now in the process of working with these groups as we ask them to demonstrate how they will be able to continue to provide a first-rate library service before making a decision on who will run the library. We have already committed to the book service staying.

The current opening offer at Laburnum Road sees the library open two days per week and it is anticipated that the successful community group would replicate or increase this level of provision.

The Leader met with the Friends of Laburnum Road Library last week and he is really pleased to say that one of the volunteers is keen to be involved in the new service and the shaping of it.”

Supplementary Question by Councillor Ovens:-

“I am sorry if you found the question a little misleading or that it appeared a little bit ambiguous but the library is actually open for things going on more than just the two days but I would like to know what would it come under, how would it be branded and what exactly would the offer be? Is it a library or is it going to be a community hub as other places have different branding and if people or whoever takes it on whoever uses it and we know that Friends of Laburnum Road Library and Friends of the Cemetery who use it for events and things. If they have any problems in the area and any difficulties with using equipment in there which we are told could be used as I was told by one of our health CDO’s that I could use but could not access will there be help and support from the Council?”

Councillor Richardson replied as follows:-

“I do not know what people’s problems would be so I cannot say yes to help with everything but the idea is to have the building open more, do more, or serving the community more we are working up those proposals but I cannot commit to what a voluntary service will do until we have had those conversations but what I can say is we are soon to be announcing it and I think you will be pleased with the offer as will the residents of East Redcar. I do not know the future name.”

Q6. Question from Councillor Thomson to Councillor Richardson, Cabinet Member for Climate and Culture.

“Why, in respect of specific requests for specific refinements to be made to Saltburn Library opening times, were details of these requests not taken away by senior officers having been made at the appropriate Scrutiny Committee and at Cabinet and never communicated to those considering the final opening hours timetable?”

Councillor Richardson replied as follows:-

“The senior officers in question no longer work at the Council. Therefore, it is not possible to say categorically whether comments were or were not fed through verbally, but if this was not done formally then this is a regretful oversight.

The opening hours for Saltburn library cannot be taken in isolation.

Library hours are interdependent on one another and therefore any amendments to the Saltburn proposals would have had a ripple effect across the other library hours too.

The proposals have been refined as a consequence of the 13 week consultation process, including specific sessions for Elected Members. The final proposals do seek to accommodate as much of the feedback received as possible but clearly it is not possible to satisfy the stated requirements of each individual consultee.”

Supplementary Question by Councillor Thomson:-

“We understand that the Senior Officers, two in number, are no longer with the Authority, however, I do not wish to speak ill of the dead but whether those officers are currently employed or not, there is an ethos that we as elected members should be prepared to understand that exists. The discussion is not that there are arguments that might justify taking into account other aspects of the Library Service in the Borough and one understands that there is weighting to be considered in any final decision but the point of my original question was that an understanding was given to Members at scrutiny, a formal committee of this Authority, an understanding was given at Cabinet to the representative of the scrutiny system, and that understanding was never transmitted to those making the considered decision so why there may be a justifiable arguments to be put forward for one side of the case, if the points made for the other side of the case are never made then the case will never be properly considered. That is the fundamental principle of the failure of these officers to communicate. Will the Cabinet and the Senior Officers of this Authority undertake a review of the ethos of Member comment which should be honoured, respected and transmitted for the value that it has, taken away when decisions are being considered as a result of documents presented to Members that are not finalised.”

Councillor Richardson replied as follows:-

“I cannot say that they never fed back any comments as they are not here to answer for themselves and they are not here for me to ask them so I do not agree that they absolutely did not feed anything back as I cannot answer for them. I will look into whether we will have a review of the ethos of Members comments”

Q7. Question from Councillor Thomson to Councillor Brook, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods.

“When will Redcar & Cleveland Council be reviewing its policy of only carrying out maintenance work on areas that are on flat ground?”

Councillor Brook replied as follows:-

“There is no blanket ban on working on slopes and the council’s

approach is to evaluate each slope on an individual basis to determine a safe method of working on it, if required. This approach was implemented in 2019 following an incident in Skinningrove where a ride-on mower slid down a slope.

Working on slopes can pose several serious risks, especially in construction and other outdoor activities, which include landslides, falls and slips, stability of heavy equipment and rockfalls.

Neighbourhood Officers were asked to identify all slopes within their geographical area. The slopes were then categorised according to gradient, condition and stability of the bankside and required activity. Suitable methods and control measures would then be determined, these would range from mechanical cut, remote equipment or in some cases exclude from work based on safety concerns.

I have already highlighted the areas that you have raised with me and if these have not been re evaluated I will ensure that it gets done again and will feed back to you.”

Supplementary Question by Councillor Thomson:-

“When will I be able to get a time to answer my first question that says when will? The reply is that it is being considered but not when and the reason that it is important that we do get an answer to when is that the impression being given to all volunteers and the Leader made comment at the beginning of the meeting how important volunteers are to the welfare of this community and to assist in delivering the Council Services. Currently in Saltburn Valley Gardens there is a directive which says that from immediate effect no work will be done other than on a flat service so the conclusion from all the volunteers who have spent the last 14 months doing work that was required to contribute to the removal of the at risk register is giving the impression that this Council is a Member of the Flat Earth Society.

When will the review be conducted?

Councillor Brook replied as follows:-

“We cannot review a policy that does not exist as we do not have a policy that states that we will only work on flat ground and if that is the information that officers are feeding back I apologise. There is no blanket ban on working on slopes. We evaluate it and all are approached differently in the work method. I will bring back a date where we are going to evaluate the areas that you have identified with me directly and see how we move forward.”

Long Service Award.

“The Leader congratulated John Sampson, the Managing Director on

behalf of the Council, for completing 15 years service for the Authority in April 2024. The work of the long serving members of staff is vital to the Council's success. He thanked him for his loyalty and commitment in reaching this milestone in his career. This is a significant achievement and we are very fortunate to have a dedicated and experienced colleague who helped to ensure we continue to deliver excellent services to our residents."

The Mayor thanked Members for their attendance and declared the meeting closed.