

Sunderland City Council

At a MEETING of SUNDERLAND CITY COUNCIL held in the CIVIC CENTRE on WEDNESDAY, 25TH JUNE, 2008 at 6.00 p.m.

Present: The Mayor (Councillor M. Smith) in the Chair
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor D. Richardson)

Councillors	Allan	Francis	I.J. Richardson	Vardy
	Anderson	E. Gibson	Rolph	Wake
	Ball	P. Gibson	Scaplehorn	Wakefield
	Bell	Gofton	J. Scott	Walker
	Blackburn	A. Hall	Shattock	J. Walton
	Chamberlin	Heron	D. Smith	L. Walton
	Copeland	Howe	P. Smith	Wares
	A. Cuthbert	Kelly	Snowdon	P. Watson
	I. Cuthbert	Leadbitter	Speding	S. Watson
	M. Dixon	L. Martin	Stephenson	A. Wilson
	P. Dixon	T. Martin	Stewart	D. Wilson
	Errington	Miller	Symonds	A. Wright
	Fairs	Mordey	Tate	N. Wright
	Fletcher	Morrisey	Timmins	T.H. Wright
	D. Forbes	O'Connor	Trueman	
	M. Forbes	Oliver	Tye	

The Notice convening the meeting was read.

Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council held on 14th May, 2008 and the State of the City debate held on 4th June, 2008 (copies circulated) be confirmed as correct records subject to the following amendments in respect of the Annual Meeting:-

- Page 2 – Vote delete Councillor Oliver as seconder of the amended motion and replace with Councillor Morrisey;
- Page 2 – Vote delete Councillors D. Smith and Ellis from the list of Councillors voting against the amendment;
- Page 6 – Attendance record Councillors Copeland and N. Wright as being in attendance;
- Page 7 – Apologies record the submission of an apology for absence in respect of Councillor Chamberlin.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Mayor's Announcements

i) Private Nathan Cuthbertson

It was with sadness that the Mayor reminded Council of the recent death in the Helmand Province of Southern Afghanistan of Private Nathan Cuthbertson, who was serving as a Machine Gunner and Infantry Assault Engineer in the 2nd Battalion of the Parachute Regiment.

Members and Officers joined the Mayor in observing a minute's silence as a mark of respect for Private Cuthbertson and those other young men from Sunderland who had, in recent years, died in the service of their Country – Lance Corporal Sean Tansey, Corporal Simon Miller, Weapons Submariner Anthony Huntrod and Private Michael Tench.

ii) The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Renaissance Awards

At the invitation of the Mayor, the Leader of the Council, Councillor P. Watson, informed the meeting of the Council's success in winning the RICS Regional Regeneration Award for the Sunnyside Gardens.

This was the latest in a string of accolades awarded to the Gardens, which were officially opened in March 2007 and had become a catalyst for regeneration in the east end of the City Centre. Last year the project was Highly Commended at the distinguished Landscape Institute Awards, and the engineering firm that built the gardens, Seymour (Civil Engineering Contractors) Ltd. also received a commendation at the Civil Engineering Contractors Association North East Awards.

The Award recognised the achievement of Sunderland City Council, the Sunnyside Partnership, the designer and contractor, who had all worked tremendously hard to create this symbol of regeneration in the City Centre. He then presented the Mayor with the Award which she accepted on behalf of the Council.

iii) LACORS National Awards

At the invitation of the Mayor, the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Public Health, Councillor H. Trueman, informed the meeting of the Council's success at the Local Authorities Co-ordinators of Regulatory Services (LACORS) National Awards Event, held at Milton Keynes, to reward innovation, imagination and customer excellence in the registration service.

Sunderland had made two successful submissions, one for 'Improvement in Performance' and the other for 'Innovation in Service Delivery'.

The 'Improvement in Performance' submission reflected the work completed in Registrars over the last three years to modernise the way the Council delivered its service in Sunderland.

The 'Innovation in Service Delivery' submission reflected the way the Council reviewed the format of its Citizenship Ceremony and the welcome that is given to new British citizens in Sunderland.

Sunderland was the only Council to win two Awards, beating off stiff competition from Liverpool City Council and Gloucestershire City Council in each of the categories.

iv) National Association of Civic Officers

At the invitation of the Mayor, the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor D. Allan, informed the meeting that the Council's Members' Services Team had been entered into the National Association of Civic Officers' Civic Office of the Year Awards and were delighted to be awarded third place in this national competition.

v) The North East Charter for Elected Member Development

At the invitation of the Mayor, the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor D. Allan, informed the meeting of the Council's success in achieving the North East Charter for Elected Member Development which required the Council to demonstrate its commitment to supporting Elected Members in terms of their development and learning.

The verification report had stated:

"Sunderland City Council has been committed to Elected Member development for many years. However, since the signing of the new Member Development Charter in early 2005, the authority has measured itself against the guidelines and has implemented changes and improvements in order to meet the criteria within 16 months. It is a credit to the authority's officers and Members that this has been achieved, bearing in mind all the other pressures within local government."

The presentation of the Award had been made to representatives of the Council at a ceremony held at The Sage, Gateshead on 25th March, 2008.

vi) IDeA Get On (GO) Local Government Award and the Skills Pledge

At the invitation of the Mayor, the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Allan informed the meeting that the Get On (GO) Local Government Award Certificate was presented to the City Council at the IDeA celebration event held in London the 19th March, 2008 as an acknowledgement of the work

already carried out and the robust and progressive action plan in place to address the skills needs of the Council's workforce.

He then formally presented the Mayor with the Get On Local Government Award Certificate endorsed by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and the Government Skills Pledge Certificate which she accepted on behalf of the Council.

vii) Southern Radial Route Awards

At the invitation of the Mayor, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation, Councillor J. Blackburn, informed the meeting that a joint submission by Sunderland City Council and Arup and Birse Civils Limited had won the region's prestigious 'Project of the Year' Award in the Constructing Excellence Awards for 2008.

The coveted award was presented to the Southern Radial Route Project Team for displaying the highest level of technical achievement, innovation and application of best practice.

Criteria considered by the judges focussed on integration and collaborative working, health and safety, sustainability, community engagement and value and accomplishment of goals.

The joint submission would automatically go forward to the national Constructing Excellence finals which would be held later in the year.

The Southern Radial Route had also received a commendation in the Robert Stephenson Awards presented by the Northern Area of the Institution of Civil Engineers.

The judges had commented favourably on "a consummate team effort, managing a number of issues of technical complexity and environmental sensitivity, to provide infrastructure that not only improved the quality of life of an existing community, but also facilitated the regeneration of an area ready for growth".

viii) Culture and Leisure Awards

At the invitation of the Mayor, the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Leisure, Councillor Speding, informed the meeting that the Sunderland International Airshow had won a gold award for Best Tourism Experience of the Year at the Enjoy England Awards for Excellence 2008 held at St. George's Hall, Liverpool on 23rd April, 2008.

He was also pleased to announce that the Monkwearmouth Station Museum was a Green Plaque winner at the Eight International Green Apple Awards for the Built Environment and Architectural Heritage held at the Tower of London on 8th June, 2008. In addition the Museum had also been shortlisted in the National Lottery Awards to find the Nation's favourite lottery funded project.

Reception of Petitions

RESOLVED that the undermentioned petitions submitted by the Councillors respectively named be received and referred for consideration to the Officer indicated below:-

- (i) Councillor Copeland – petition regarding anti social behaviour in Keats Avenue –Chief Executive;(Acting)
- (ii) Councillor Wake – petition to improve parking facilities for residents of Kestral Close, Ayton, Washington – Director of Development and Regeneration;
- (iii) Councillor Chamberlin – petition for parking facilities for Holley Park School, Ayton Road, Washington – Director of Development and Regeneration.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Arnott, Charlton, Ellis, Foster, G. Hall, Paul Maddison, Peter Maddison, Old, J.B. Scott, Whalen and Wood.

The Cabinet reported as follows:-

1. Terms of Reference of Overview and Scrutiny Committees

That they had given consideration to a joint report of the Chief Executive (Acting) and the City Solicitor (copy circulated) on changes to the Terms of Reference of Overview and Scrutiny Committees to provide a more strategic focus and enhance their impact as part of the improvement plan for scrutiny, to consider proposals for the future role and operation of the Review Committees, to better reflect the priorities of the Council and partners and to prepare for the changes and demands of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act.

The Cabinet had recommended the Council to approve the proposed changes to the Terms of Reference to the Review Committees and for the Constitution to be revised accordingly.

They had also referred the report to all of the Review Committees for further advice and consideration. The Children's Services and Health and Well Being Review Committees welcomed the proposals set out in the report and agreed that it be received and noted.

The Culture and Leisure Review Committee had noted the report. The Environmental and Planning, Regeneration and Community and Policy and

Co-ordination Review Committees had all welcomed the report and agreed the proposals for amending the terms of reference of the Review Committees.

However Members of each Committee had expressed reservations regarding the arbitrary figure of 250 signatures needed to trigger Council action on petitions. Members of the Regeneration and Community Review Committee suggested that a trigger based on percentages would be more appropriate. The Environmental and Planning Review Committee had recommended that when it was clear to what extent the Council had discretion to adopt petition arrangements, that careful consideration be given to the arrangements which would best meet the needs of the City. In addition Members of the Policy and Co-ordination Review Committee welcomed the Councillor Calls for Action proposals as a useful tool of community empowerment. (Regulations were still being awaited on the issues of petitions and Councillor Calls for Action).

2. Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS): Further Proposed Changes – Response of the City Council

That they had given consideration to a report of the Director of Development and Regeneration (copy circulated) on specific issues resulting from the modifications which were of significance to the future development and land use within the City.

The Cabinet had recommended the Council to endorse the response to the further proposed changes to the RSS, as attached in the report appendices, which had been forwarded to the Government Office North East (GO-NE) to meet the consultation deadline of 2nd April, 2008.

They had also referred the report to the Environmental and Planning Review Committee and the Planning and Highways Committee for further advice and consideration.

The Environmental and Planning Review Committee had recommended the Council to endorse the response to the further proposed changes to the RSS, which had been forwarded to the Government Office North East to meet the consultation deadline of 2nd April, 2008.

The Planning and Highways Committee having congratulated officers on its preparation, had recommended the Council to endorse the response to the further proposed changes to the RSS which had been forwarded to the Government Office North East to meet the consultation deadline of 2nd April, 2008.

RESOLVED that the report of Cabinet, together with the views of the Review Committees and the Planning and Highways Committee, be approved and adopted.

Review Committees – end of Year Reports 2007/2008

The City Solicitor submitted Annual Reports (copies circulated) for the year 2007/2008 in respect of the following Committees:-

- (i) Culture and Leisure Review Committee;
- (ii) Children's Services Review Committee;
- (iii) Environmental and Planning Review Committee;
- (iv) Policy and Co-ordination Review Committee;
- (v) Regeneration and Community Review Committee;
- (vi) Health and Well-Being Review Committee.

(For copy reports – see original minutes)

RESOLVED that the End of Year Reports be received and noted.

Written Questions (if any) under Rule 8.2

Pursuant to Rule 8.2 of the Council Rules of Procedure Members of the Council asked questions of the Leader and Members of the Executive.

(i) Notice of Motion – Local Tax Burden

Councillor L. Martin, seconded by Councillor Morrissey, moved "that this Council recognises that higher bills and the rising cost of living is making it increasingly difficult for people to make ends meet. Furthermore, this Council believes that Council Tax bills have reached the limit of what is acceptable or affordable and therefore instructs the Acting Chief Executive to bring forward, in conjunction with the City Treasurer, proposals for additional future cost savings to ensure that Council Tax bills in Sunderland do not rise in 2009/10."

Councillor P. Watson, seconded by Councillor Anderson, moved an amendment to the motion in that the second sentence be amended as follows:-

- delete - "have reached the limit of what is acceptable or affordable";
- insert - "add to this burden"
- delete - "Acting Chief Executive"
- insert - "Cabinet"
- delete - "in conjunction with the City Treasurer"
- delete - "do not rise"
- insert - "continue to be as low as possible"

so that the amended motion would read:-

"This Council recognises that higher bills and the rising cost of living is making it increasingly difficult for people to make ends meet. Furthermore, this Council believes that Council Tax Bills add to this burden and therefore instructs the Cabinet to bring forward proposals for additional future cost savings to ensure that Council Tax bills in Sunderland continue to be as low as possible, in 2009/10."

Upon being put to the vote, the amendment was carried with 40 Members voting in favour, viz:-

The Mayor (Councillor M. Smith)
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor D. Richardson)

Councillor	Allan	P. Gibson	Shattock	Tye
	Anderson	Gofton	P. Smith	Walker
	Ball	A. Hall	Snowdon	Wares
	Bell	Heron	Speding	P. Watson
	Blackburn	Kelly	Stephenson	S. Watson
	P. Dixon	Miller	Stewart	A. Wilson
	Errington	Mordey	Symonds	N. Wright
	Fletcher	Rolph	Tate	T. Wright
	D. Forbes	Scaplehorn	Timmins	
	E. Gibson	J. Scott	Trueman	

2 Members abstaining, viz:-

Councillor	D. Smith	Wakefield
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and 17 Members voting against, viz:-

Councillor	Chamberlin	M. Forbes	Oliver	L. Walton
	A. Cuthbert	Francis	I. Richardson	A. Wright
	I. Cuthbert	Howe	Vardy	
	M. Dixon	L. Martin	Wake	
	Fairs	Morrissey	J. Walton	

Upon being put to the vote the new substantive motion was carried with no members voting against, no abstentions and with 57 Members voting in favour thereof, viz:-

The Mayor (Councillor M. Smith)
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor D. Richardson)

Councillor	Allan	Francis	I. Richardson	Tye
	Anderson	E. Gibson	Rolph	Vardy
	Ball	P. Gibson	Scaplehorn	Wake
	Bell	Gofton	J. Scott	Walker
	Blackburn	A. Hall	Shattock	J. Walton
	Chamberlin	Heron	P. Smith	L. Walton
	A. Cuthbert	Howe	Snowdon	Wares
	I. Cuthbert	Kelly	Speding	P. Watson
	M. Dixon	Leadbitter	Stephenson	S. Watson
	P. Dixon	L. Martin	Stewart	A. Wilson
	Errington	Miller	Symonds	A. Wright
	Fairs	Mordey	Tate	N. Wright
	Fletcher	Morrissey	Timmins	T. Wright
	M. Forbes	Oliver	Trueman	

Accordingly it was :-

RESOLVED that this Council recognises that higher bills and the rising cost of living is making it increasingly difficult for people to make ends meet. Furthermore, this Council believes that Council Tax Bills add to this burden and therefore instructs the Cabinet to bring forward proposals for additional future cost savings to ensure that Council Tax bills in Sunderland continue to be as low as possible, in 2009/10.

APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES AND OUTSIDE BODIES – STANDARDS COMMITTEE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES REVIEW COMMITTEE, CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD, NORTHERN ARTS COMPANY AND THE NORTHERN ARTS LOCAL AUTHORITY FORUM

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) requesting Council to consider its representation on the Standards Committee, the Children's Services Committee and the Corporate Parenting Board and to note the current position in relation to the Northern Arts Company and the Northern Arts Local Authority Forum.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Leader, seconded by the Deputy Leader, moved that the recommendations contained in the report be approved, and the Mayor, having put the matter to the meeting, it was:-

RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the content of the report and the position in relation to the Northern Arts Committee and the Northern Arts Local Authority Forum, be noted;

- (ii) the nomination of Councillor P. Dixon to serve on the Children's Services Committee as an "alternative arrangement" to the political balance rules, be approved;
- (iii) Councillor A.R. Wilkinson of Hetton Town Council be appointed to the remaining place on the Standards Committee; and
- (iv) Councillor A. Hall be appointed to serve on the Corporate Parenting Board in place of Councillor D. Forbes.

(Signed) M. SMITH
Mayor