

# ***Motions on Notice***



**MOTIONS ON NOTICE**

Council Members are asked to consider the under-mentioned Motions:-

**1. Notice of Motion – The Right to Play**

This Council recognises the need to improve play facilities for those children with disabilities across the City of Sunderland. Appropriate play is vital for the development, health, wellbeing and happiness of our children, particularly for young people facing barriers like discrimination and exclusion.

Every child should have equal right to play and enjoy childhood experiences through a range of challenging, formal and informal play opportunities in a safe and inclusive environment wherever they are in Sunderland which adheres to Article 31 of the UNCRC.

Therefore, Council resolves to ensure that:

- All Council play parks are risk assessed for accessibility and inclusiveness for those with disabilities with the City Council to produce short-, medium- and long-term action plans which should be reported back to Council within six months.
- All future play spaces are developed with community participation, co-design and co-production - and, when equipment is damaged or vandalised, consideration is given to replacing it with accessible alternatives.
- All disabled children can enjoy inclusive and appropriate play parks that are accessible within a reasonable distance of their home.
- To install a minimum of one wheelchair swing in each of the five committee areas.
- To enhance sensory involvement by procuring equipment which is aimed at touch and sound senses for those with audio or visual impairments.

Councillor R. Dunn (Proposer)  
Councillor P. Mann (Seconder)

**Signed by:-**

Councillor R. Dunn  
Councillor P. Mann  
Councillor J. McKeith  
Councillor A. Mullen  
Councillor S. Johnston

Councillor H. Greener  
Councillor S. Ayre  
Councillor P. Wood  
Councillor M. Dixon

Councillor U. Ali  
Councillor P. Donaghy  
Councillor L. Reed  
Councillor C. Burnicle

## 2. Notice of Motion – Sewage Dumping by Water Companies

This Council notes that:

- Environment Agency reporting data has revealed that water companies in England have recorded 772,000 sewage dumping events in 2020 and 2021. Across the Northumbrian Water area there have been 69,048 sewage dumping events reported to the Environment Agency in the same time period.
- Northumbrian Water made profits of £758.4m in the 2020/2021 fiscal year and that the Chief Executive of Northumbrian Water received a bonus and benefits of £575,000 on top of a base salary of £1,465,000, taking home a total package including pension contributions of £2,214,000.
- The Environment Act 2021 failed to set water companies with specific targets or deadlines to reduce sewage outflows into waterways and the sea.

Council believes that:

- No one should be paid a bonus for long term and endemic failure with no satisfactory solution in sight.
- Action needs to be taken both at local and national level to address the failures of privatised water companies operating in England.

Council therefore resolves to:

- Ask the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and urge the government to legislate to block any further bonus payments to directors of water companies in England until a satisfactory solution has been achieved.
- Ask the Chief Executive to write to Northumbrian Water and the Environment Agency and urge them to take action to reduce the number and volume of outflows at Seaburn, Roker, Hendon and in the River Wear; and further request that Northumbria Water commission an independent survey of the sewage outflows into the North Sea off Sunderland and publish that report in the public domain.

Councillor M. Haswell (Proposer)  
Councillor M. Bond (Seconder)

### **Signed by:-**

Councillor N. Hodson	Councillor A. Wood	Councillor J. Potts
Councillor S. O'Brien	Councillor M. Crosby	Councillor P. Edgeworth
Councillor G. Smith	Councillor C. Nicholson	Councillor C. Morrissey
Councillor P.W.L. Gibson	Councillor H. Fagan	Councillor A. Curtis

### **3. Notice of Motion – Protecting Tyne & Wear Fire Service**

Sunderland Council notes that the Home Office and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) have recognised the magnificent work Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service carried out to support the country's response to the COVID-19 and the work it does to protect the local community and businesses from fire risk.

That challenge has been made all the more difficult by the impact of global and national economic factors in recent months that have far exceeded the inflationary assumptions within the current Budget and Financial Plan approved in February 2022.

Council notes that the TWFRS is committed to facing these challenges positively and constructively. However, Council recognises the real current impact of inflation on their ability to deliver much-needed services for local people and businesses, including in Sunderland.

The highest levels of inflation for four decades are now driving up the costs of the raw materials, labour, energy and other costs which the Fire Authority must pay for in order to provide essential public services and capital investment in the Service.

The Fire Authority's budget for 2022/23 was set in February 2022 based on estimates that price inflation and wage growth would both be in the region of 2% to 3% in 2022/23. These were not unrealistic assumptions as they reflected the Government's own forecasts for inflation in 2022 and 2023, specifically: -

- In October 2021, the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 Statement set out forecasts that the Consumer Price Index could reach 4% in 2022, but would fall to 2.6% by 2023;
- In December 2021, the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement uprated grant funding for 2022/23 by the actual Consumer Price Index as at September 2021 (3.1%); and,
- In February 2022 (when TWFRS budgets were being finalised), the Office of Budget Responsibility forecast that the Consumer Price Index could reach 4.7% in 2022 but would fall to 2.3% by 2023.

Council notes that, since then, there has since been a dramatic shift in these expectations. The latest figure (19 October 2022) from the Office of Budget Responsibility is that the Consumer Price Index is now 10.1%— significantly higher than both the inflationary increase in funding which the Fire Authority received and the forecast increases which informed the TWFRS budget for 2022/23.

Coupled with continuing growth in demand for Protection services and meeting increasing risks such as flooding, Council recognises that the TWFRS is now facing enormous financial difficulties.

***Council notes that the Institute for Government recently estimated that local authorities in England will be facing unbudgeted costs of up to £2bn as a result of inflation being significantly higher than was forecast in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn Budget and Spending Review announcements. The Fire Authority has estimated that this impact could exceed the revenue provision by £2.5m in 2022/23 and the expected increase in capital expenditure is potentially in excess of £5m;***

***The Fire Authority had a fixed price electricity contract that ended in March 2022. The new contract has increased prices but with escalating utility costs both Gas and Electricity costs are increasing significantly and this impact has been included within the above revenue budget projection.***

Capital projects – many of which are essential in providing firefighters with the relevant training, PPE and equipment to provide an effective and safe fire response, have also been hit. The Fire Authority is facing significant extra costs due to increases in the price of raw materials and labour.

The local government and firefighter pay award for 2022/23 have yet to be resolved –with inflation at 10.1% this year, pay disputes are inevitable if pay offers represent significant real-terms pay cuts. While removing any “cap” on pay increases, the Government has previously stated that any pay award must be funded from the Fire Authority budget.

This was already going to be difficult when pay was forecast to rise by around 2.5%, pay awards above those levels will add significant pressure on Authority finances if they are not resourced from additional funding provided by the Government. The Fire Authority had, through careful budget management made provision for a 3% pay rise however, it is clear that this will not cover the potential pay rise demands now faced.

Each additional 1% pay rise above what has been budgeted for will cost approximately £0.5m; and, Operational revenue budgets across the full range of Authority services are being impacted by increases in the costs of materials, fuel, labour and a higher indexation ratio being applied to outsourced contracts.

Council recognises that the financial challenge of inflation comes on top of the enormous pressures faced by the Fire Authority after a decade of austerity when the biggest cuts in local authority funding impacted on the authorities in the most deprived areas of the country because they relied more heavily on the Government grants which were cut so severely.

The Fire Authority is also less able to raise income from increases in Council Tax and Business Rates. Council is concerned that, without extra support, the Fire Authority may have to once again balance the books by cutting more essential services to our vulnerable residents in Sunderland.

Council notes that, over the last decade or so, the TWFRS have prioritised every possible option to achieve greater efficiency and minimise the need to cut budgets for essential services. It is clearly not realistic to expect financial pressures of this magnitude to be addressed through further efficiencies.

Council notes that, in effect, the Local Government Finance Settlement was determined on the basis of a set of assumptions which has since been proven to be significantly inaccurate. Council appreciates that those assumptions were legitimate at the time, but global and national events since then have created a wholly different set of circumstances. It would be unfair and unrealistic to expect the Fire Authority to be able to cope with the scale of those changes. Sunderland Council therefore urges the Government to ensure that the inflationary pressures facing fire and rescue authorities in 2022/23 are properly and fully funded.

Council asserts that, in the longer-term, for Levelling Up to be effective, it is essential that inequalities in local government funding are addressed. This must be reflected in both the forthcoming “Fair Funding” Review and the 2023/24 Local Government Finance Settlement – which should ensure that local authority funding is fairly distributed on the basis of local levels of deprivation and properly reflects the prevailing rates of price inflation and wage inflation which affect the services that the Fire Authority delivers.

Council urges the Government to appreciate that the fire and rescue sector cannot resolve the current difficulties without national Government support.

**The Council Leader in conjunction with all Tyne and Wear Council Leaders is therefore requested to write to the appropriate Government Minister, to seek such financial support, as a matter of urgency.**

Councillor P. Tye            (Proposer)  
Councillor J. Usher        (Seconder)

**Signed by:-**

Councillor P. Tye  
Councillor J. Usher  
Councillor M. Herron  
Councillor M. Butler  
Councillor J. Herron  
Councillor J. Warne  
Councillor P. Smith

Councillor A. Chisnall  
Councillor G. Miller  
Councillor C. Rowntree  
Councillor F. Miller  
Councillor I. Scott  
Councillor J. Price

Councillor K. Chequer  
Councillor K. Johnston  
Councillor L. Williams  
Councillor L. Farthing  
Councillor P. Walker  
Councillor P. Stewart