

# ***Minutes***



## Sunderland City Council

At a meeting of SUNDERLAND CITY COUNCIL held in the COUNCIL CHAMBER, CITY HALL, SUNDERLAND on WEDNESDAY 24 JANUARY 2024 at 4.00pm

**Present:** The Mayor (Councillor D Trueman) in the Chair  
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor A Chisnall)

Councillors	Ayre	Foster	McKeith	Smith, P
	Blackburn	Gibson	Miller, F	Snowdon, D
	Bond	Guy	Miller, G	Snowdon, D E
	Burrell	Haque	Mordey	Speding
	Butler	Hartnack	Morrissey	Thornton
	Chapman	Haswell	Mullen	Trueman, H
	Chequer	Heron	O'Brien	Tye
	Crosby	Herron	Peacock	Usher
	Curtis	Johnston, K	Price	Vera
	Dixon	Johnston, S	Reed	Walker, M
	Dodds	Laverick	Rowntree	Walker, P
	Dunn	Laws	Scanlan	Walton
	Edgeworth	Leonard	Scott	Warne
	Fagan	Mason-Gage	Smith, A	Williams
	Fletcher	McDonough	Smith, G	Wood

The notice convening the meeting was read.

### Apologies

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Burnicle, Donaghy, Graham-King, Hodson, Hunter, Jones, Nicholson, Potts, Samuels, Stewart, Watson and Wilson together with Honorary Aldermen Forbes, Greenfield and Tate.

### Minutes

Councillor Reed requested the minutes be amended to reflect that Councillor McKeith had been in attendance at the meeting on 15 November 2023.

- 39. RESOLVED** that, subject to the above amendment, the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 15 November 2023 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

## Announcements

There were no announcements on this occasion.

## Outstanding Motions from the last ordinary meeting of the Council

### (i) Notice of Motion – Amendment to Sunderland City Council Constitution (Part 2 Article 10 Area Committees)

Councillor Mullen, duly seconded by Councillor Edgeworth moved the following motion: -

“To amend Part 2, Article 10 of the Constitution as follows. To insert under ‘Terms of Reference’ - contained within the table located at 10.02 (a) (Form, Composition and Function) – an additional bullet point beneath "To support delivery of these objectives the Area Committee may..." which reads

- decide how funding allocated to the Area Committee in the annual Council budget should be structured and disseminated, including allocating ward-based budgets.”

Upon being put to the vote the motion was defeated with 21 Members voting in favour: -

Councillors	Ayre	Fagan	McKeith	Vera
	Bond	Gibson	Morrissey	Wood
	Crosby	Hartnack	Mullen	Walton
	Dixon	Haswell	O'Brien	
	Dunn	Johnston, S	Peacock	
	Edgeworth	McDonough	Reed	

40 Members voting against: -

Councillors	Blackburn	Guy	Morley	Speding
	Burrell	Haque	Miller, G	Snowdon, D E
	Butler	Heron	Price	Thornton
	Chapman	Herron	Rowntree	Trueman, D
	Chequer	Johnston, K	Scanlan	Trueman, H
	Chisnall	Laverick	Scott	Usher
	Curtis	Laws	Smith, A	Walker, M
	Dodds	Leonard	Smith, G	Walker, P
	Fletcher	Mason-Gage	Smith, P	Warne
	Foster	Miller, F	Snowdon, D	Williams

Accordingly it was: -

**40. RESOLVED** that the motion be defeated.

**(ii) Notice of Motion – Bringing the Metro to Hendon, Grangetown, Ryhope and beyond**

Councillor Wood, duly seconded by Councillor Morrissey, moved the following motion: -

“This council:

- supports efforts to re-open the Leamside Line, and to extend Tyne and Wear Metro services to Washington.
- regrets the Government’s U-turn on committing to re-opening the Leamside Line less than 24 hours after the announcement was made.
- Supports extending the Tyne and Wear Metro to reach more of Sunderland. To ensure a route through Hendon, and Grangetown to Ryhope. To ensure a route so Doxford Park has a station.
- Believes that extending the Metro across Sunderland is of equal importance as reopening the Leamside Line in developing our vibrant city.

Council therefore resolves to ask the Chief Executive to write to relevant regional transport authorities, and to the Secretary of State for Transport to ask them to prioritise preparing a business case for extending the Metro to Hendon, Grangetown, Ryhope and other parts of Sunderland as a matter of priority, alongside preparing the business case to re-open the Leamside Line.

Councillor Mordey, duly seconded by Councillor G Miller, moved the following amendment: -

- First bullet point delete “supports efforts” and insert “reaffirms our support”
- Third bullet point delete “supports extending” and insert “reaffirms our current policy of supporting the extension of”
- Delete the whole of the last paragraph and replace it with

“Council therefore resolves to ask the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Transport to ask him to provide the necessary funding for the regional transport body to develop a detailed business case for extending the Metro to Hendon, Grangetown, Ryhope and other parts of Sunderland as a matter of priority, alongside preparing the business case to re-open the Leamside Line.”

**So that the amended motion would read: -**

This Council:

- Reaffirms our support to re-open the Leamside Line, and to extend Tyne and Wear Metro services to Washington.

- regrets the Government's U-turn on committing to re-opening the Leamside Line less than 24 hours after the announcement was made.
- Reaffirms our current policy of supporting the extension of the Tyne and Wear Metro to reach more of Sunderland. To ensure a route through Hendon, and Grangetown to Ryhope. To ensure a route so Doxford Park has a station.
- Believes that extending the Metro across Sunderland is of equal importance as reopening the Leamside Line in developing our vibrant city.

Council therefore resolves to ask the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Transport to ask him to provide the necessary funding for the regional transport body to develop a detailed business case for extending the Metro to Hendon, Grangetown, Ryhope and other parts of Sunderland as a matter of priority, alongside preparing the business case to re-open the Leamside Line.

Upon being put to the vote, the amendment was carried with: -

51 Members voting in favour: -

Councillors	Blackburn	Foster	Miller, G	Snowdon, D E
	Bond	Gibson	Mordey	Thornton
	Burrell	Guy	Morrissey	Trueman, D
	Butler	Haque	O'Brien	Trueman, H
	Chapman	Haswell	Price	Usher
	Chequer	Heron	Rowntree	Tye
	Chisnall	Herron	Scanlan	Walker, M
	Crosby	Johnston, K	Scott	Walker, P
	Curtis	Laverick	Smith, A	Warne
	Dodds	Laws	Smith, G	Williams
	Edgeworth	Leonard	Smith, P	Walton
	Fagan	Mason-Gage	Snowdon, D	Wood
	Fletcher	Miller, F	Speding	

0 Members against

And 11 Members abstaining: -

Councillors	Ayre	Hartnack	McKeith	Reed
	Dixon	Johnston, S	Mullen	Vera
	Dunn	McDonough	Peacock	

The Mayor then put the substantive motion to the meeting and accordingly it was: -

#### **41. RESOLVED that: -**

This Council:

- Reaffirms our support to re-open the Leamside Line, and to extend Tyne and Wear Metro services to Washington.
- Regrets the Government's U-turn on committing to re-opening the Leamside Line less than 24 hours after the announcement was made.
- Reaffirms our current policy of supporting the extension of the Tyne and Wear Metro to reach more of Sunderland. To ensure a route through Hendon, and Grangetown to Ryhope. To ensure a route so Doxford Park has a station.
- Believes that extending the Metro across Sunderland is of equal importance as reopening the Leamside Line in developing our vibrant city.

Council therefore resolves to ask the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Transport to ask him to provide the necessary funding for the regional transport body to develop a detailed business case for extending the Metro to Hendon, Grangetown, Ryhope and other parts of Sunderland as a matter of priority, alongside preparing the business case to re-open the Leamside Line.

#### **Reception of Petitions**

- 42. RESOLVED** that the petitions listed below submitted by the Councillors named be received and referred to the appropriate Chief Officer for consideration in accordance with the Council's Petitions Scheme: -

Councillor Haswell – Petition requesting Sunderland City Council to resurface Faraday Grove.

Councillor Haswell – Petition requesting the Council to fund the installation of a Post Box on Fordfield Road close to Dovecote Meadow and Havelock Court.

Councillor Gibson– Petition from residents requesting the Council and Nexus to carry out a review of the decision to re-route the No.4 and 13 bus services which has meant that there is no Stagecoach service along Doxford Park Way between Morrisons and Mill Hill and consider reinstating the service in this area.

Councillor Peacock – Petition from residents to revitalise St Anne's Riverside paths and picnic areas:

1. Invest in repairing uneven paths, installing proper lighting fixtures along walkways, ensuring sturdy benches are available throughout the area (safety improvement);
2. Regularly upkeep of picnic areas including moving grass regularly; providing refuse bins at convenient locations (enhanced maintenance); and

3. To make necessary adjustments such as wheelchair ramps or accessible pathways so that individuals with disabilities can also enjoy our beautiful rivers (accessibility upgrades).

### **Written Questions by Members of the Public under Rule 10**

Pursuant to Rule 10 of the Council Rules of Procedure, the Leader and Members of the Cabinet were asked questions which had been submitted by members of the public.

### **Written Questions by Members of the Council under Rule 11**

Pursuant to Rule 11 of the Council Rules of Procedure, the Leader and Members of the Cabinet were asked questions which had been submitted by Members of the Council.

### **Report of the Cabinet**

The Cabinet reported and recommended as follows: -

#### **1. Council Tax Base 2024-2025**

That at its meeting held on 18 January 2024, Cabinet gave consideration to a report of the Director of Finance regarding the calculation of the Council Tax Base for 2024/2025 and to seek approval to recommend to Council the Council Tax Base for 2024/2025 in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012.

The Cabinet recommended to Council that: -

- (i) the report for the calculation of the Tax Bases for the City Council and Hetton Town Council for 2024/2025 be approved; and
- (ii) pursuant to the report and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992, as amended by Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012 the amount calculated by Sunderland City Council as its Council Tax Base for the year 2024/2025, shall be 74,484 and for the area of Hetton Town Council shall be 4,267.

## **2. Local Council Tax Support Scheme**

That at its meeting held on 18 January 2024, Cabinet gave consideration to a report of the Director of Finance for the purposes of paragraph 5 of Schedule 1A to the Local Government Finance Act (LGFA) 1992, whether the Local Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTSS) – which is the Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme under section 13A(2) LGFA 1992 – should be revised or replaced with another scheme for the financial year 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

The Cabinet recommended to Council that: -

- (i) no changes be made to the current LCTSS, the main features of which are set out at Appendix A, for the City of Sunderland, except as required to incorporate any regulations laid down by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities; and
- (ii) the approved LCTSS for the financial year 2024/2025 be published on the Council's website and in any additional manner determined by the Director of Finance in consultation with the Cabinet Secretary.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor G Miller, duly seconded by the Deputy Leader, Councillor Rowntree, moved the report and supplementary report of the Cabinet.

Accordingly, it was: -

- 43. RESOLVED** that the report and supplementary report of the Cabinet be approved and adopted.

## **Action Taken on Petitions**

The Council received and noted the report below which detailed the action taken in relation to the following petitions which had been presented to the Council.

### **1. Petition – To introduce waiting restrictions, signage and remove the bus link at Barmston Village Centre**

A petition signed by 319 residents, was presented to Council on 23 March 2022 by Councillor Fiona Miller and referred to the Executive Director of City Development. The Petition read as follows:

“Requests that the council places a traffic regulation order, at the village centre shops (double yellow lines). The shop has large delivery vehicles delivering to the mini mart and chippy at all times of the day. The HGVs have obscured lines of vision for safe crossings to the shops and inconsiderate parking stopping the vehicles being able to park safely, to deliver. The residents request that there is signage to highlight for visitors to the shops, that there is a parking area just directly across the road, to enable safe parking for the shops and community pub. The residents would

like bus link removed, over the years there have been several near misses and one child injured, with drivers trying to speed through, regardless.”

Council Officers had considered the petition and advised as follows.

The location suggested has a shop, chip shop, pub and primary school within a close proximity. There are car parks clearly available for vehicles to utilise when visiting the shops, or the school. The petition was declined on the basis that the implementation of waiting restrictions at this location would not prevent the parking and loading at this location (due to observation periods for parking and loading); the car parks are clearly visible from the highway (The Department for Transport have issued a directive to reduce street clutter, such as unnecessary signage); the removal of the bus link cannot be facilitated as this was installed to remove the volume of traffic from Barmston Village Centre.

Councillor F Miller had been advised of the response.

## **2. Petition to install a traffic signal pedestrian crossing on Silksworth Lane**

A petition signed by more than 200 residents was presented to Council on 23 March 2022 by Councillor Phil Tye requesting the installation of a traffic signal pedestrian crossing on Silksworth Lane between St Christopher’s and Nursery Road. The Petition read as follows:

“Request the installation of a traffic signal pedestrian crossing on Silksworth Lane between St Christopher’s and Nursery Road, to allow the safe passage of pedestrians across the road.”

Council Officers had considered the petition and advised as follows.

The location suggested has three pedestrian refuges within close proximity that residents can utilise to cross the highway.

A Road Safety Assessment was conducted using the cabinet approved criteria. The petition was declined as this location did not meet the threshold using the Road Safety Assessment criteria for interventions and inclusion within the programme of traffic works.

Councillor Tye had been advised of the response.

## **3. Petition calling for the closure of Sterling Care Solutions, West Lodge**

A petition signed by 71 residents, was presented to Council on 13 September 2023 by Cllr Adele Graham-King. The petition read as follows:

“Petition for the Closure of Sterling Care Solutions West Lodge. This Petition is being presented to halt the ongoing issues at this establishment that houses people with alcohol and substance abuse and there was no community consultation.”

Council Officers had considered the petition and advised as follows:

The provider confirmed that all appropriate staff training had taken place and supervision processes were in place to support staff. Adult Social Care have confirmed that any customers requiring additional support, do have this in place as part of their formal care and support plan. All customers have regular unplanned visits from their allocated Social Worker. Any new referrals are considered alongside the mix of current customers to ensure they are compatible. Adult Social Care ensure there is a balance of customers with complex and low-level needs.

The provider confirmed they will make a retrospective planning application as this was an oversight on their behalf. However, Sterling Care had gained approval from the planning department to change the use from student accommodation into Housing of Multiple Occupation (HMO). The provider confirmed that there are ongoing issues with one resident for whom they are seeking an alternative placement alongside Adult Social Care colleagues. Confirmation was given that there is no drug dealing or injecting taking place in the property and there has been no record of any of the current residents at West Lodge being involved in any form of violence against local residents. The provider has reported that they have had threats made to staff and residents with people coming to the establishment which have been reported to the police. A good working relationship is in place with the local area police officers who visit regularly and not just to respond to incidents. The provider had confirmed that contact had been made with local Ward Councillors and that a meeting is to be arranged.

Councillor Graham-King had been advised of the response.

#### **4. Petition – Request that the Council urgently review the short break respite provision delivered at Grace House**

A petition signed by 6,694 residents, was presented to Council on 13 September 2023 by Councillor Anthony Mullen. The petition read as follows:

“We the undersigned residents of the City of Sunderland, petition Sunderland City Council and Together for Children, to urgently review the Short Break Respite provision which has been delivered at Grace House since 2016/17. Following a breakdown of communication between Together for Children and Grace House, families with disabled children, many with severe and complex needs, will be left bereft of assessed respite care following an announcement to parents that provision will cease in November. We fully support the Give us a Break! Campaign, and ask that negotiations are recommenced to provide this essential care with continuation of service, whilst an alternative building is sourced.”

Council Officers had considered the petition and advised as follows.

There have been two presentations to the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee (7 September and 2 November) to update Members and residents on progress in securing alternative care packages of support for children, and on identifying an alternative building through which the Council would now commission

Together for Children to run the service, as the provision from Sunderland Care and Support comes to an end. It has been made clear in those presentations and in communication with parents and carers, that the decision to remain in the building is a matter for the Grace House charity and not solely a Council decision. The charity confirmed to the Chief Executive of the Council in September that they were not in a position to agree an extension and that the service would need to exit the building as planned.

At the Cabinet meeting on 12 October 2023 the Council agreed to purchase a building in Sunderland that has been identified for the provision of overnight short breaks and as soon as the relevant legal processes have been cleared, further details will be shared with parent/carers. Parents/carers and children will be invited to contribute to the look and feel of the new home as soon as possible.

The priority has been to ensure that all children have alternative support packages and at the time of preparation of this report, these were available for all families. A further progress update will be provided to the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee in January 2024.

Councillor Mullen had been advised of the response.

**44. RESOLVED** that the report be received and noted.

### **Report on Special Urgency Decisions**

The Leader of the Council submitted a quarterly report on executive decisions which had been taken as a matter of special urgency. There had been no such instances since the last report.

**45. RESOLVED** that the report be received and noted.

### **Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies**

The Assistant Director of Law and Governance submitted a report which informed Council of changes required to the allocation of Committee seats between political groups as a result of the changes to the political balance of the Council together with additional requested changes as set out in the table below.

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Vacancy / Member to be Replaced</b>	<b>Member(s) to be Appointed</b>
Human Resources Committee	Vacancy	Labour Group Nomination to be notified.
Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee	Cllr Guy Vacancy	Cllr Samuels Ungrouped Nomination to be notified.
Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee	Vacancy	Labour Group Nomination to be notified.

Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee	Vacancy	Labour Group Nomination to be notified.
Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee	Cllr Ali	2X Labour Group Nominations to be notified.
Planning and Highways Committee	Vacancy	Labour Group Nomination to be notified
Licensing and Regulatory Committee	Vacancy	Ungrouped Nomination to be notified.
Appeals Committee	Vacancy	Labour Group Nomination to be notified.

The Leader of the Council confirmed that the Labour Group Nominations appointing to their vacancies, would be brought to the March 2024 meeting.

**46. RESOLVED that approval be given to: -**

- (i) the appointment of a Labour Group Member to the Human Resources Committee;
- (ii) the appointment of Councillor Samuels to the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee in place of Councillor Guy;
- (iii) the appointment of an Ungrouped Member to the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee;
- (iv) the appointment of a Labour Group Member to the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee;
- (v) the appointment of a Labour Group Member to the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee;
- (vi) the appointment of a Labour Group Member to the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee in place of Councillor Ali and the appointment of a further Labour Group Member in respect of the existing vacancy;
- (vii) the appointment of a Labour Group Member to the Planning and Highways Committee;
- (viii) the appointment of an Ungrouped Member to the Licensing and Regulatory Committee; and
- (ix) the appointment of a Labour Group Member to the Appeals Committee

## **Motions on Notice**

### **(i) Notice of Motion – Debate Not Hate**

Councillor Rowntree, duly seconded by Councillor Chapman, moved the following motion: -

The intimidation and abuse of councillors, in person or otherwise, undermines democracy; preventing elected members from representing the communities they serve, deterring individuals from standing for election, and undermining public life in democratic processes.

This council notes that increasing levels of toxicity in public and political discourse is having a detrimental impact of local democracy and that prevention, support and responses to abuse and intimidation of local politicians must improve to ensure councillors feel safe and able to continue representing their residents.

This council therefore commits to challenge the normalisation of abuse against councillors and officers and uphold exemplary standards of public and political debate in all it does.

The council further reaffirms its commitment to the LGA's Debate Not Hate campaign which aims to raise public awareness of the role of councillors in local communities, encourage healthy debate and improve the response to and support those in public life facing abuse and intimidation.

In addition, this council resolves to:

- Write to the Government to ask them to work with the LGA to develop and implement a plan to address abuse and intimidation of politicians.
- Ensure the council has a clear reporting mechanism which councillors can use to monitor and record incidents of harassment and abuse of councillors and officers.
- Regularly review the support available to councillors in relation to abuse and intimidation and councillor safety.
- Work with the local police to ensure there is a clear and joined-up mechanism for reporting threats and other concerns about the safety of councillors and their families and discuss the need to take a preventative approach that accounts for the specific risks that councillors face, as they do with other high-risk individuals, like MPs.
- Take a zero-tolerance approach to abuse of councillors and officers.

Upon being moved the motion was declared to be carried unanimously and accordingly it was: -

### **47. RESOLVED that: -**

The intimidation and abuse of councillors, in person or otherwise, undermines democracy; preventing elected members from representing the communities they serve, deterring individuals from standing for election, and undermining public life in democratic processes.

This council notes that increasing levels of toxicity in public and political discourse is having a detrimental impact of local democracy and that prevention, support and responses to abuse and intimidation of local politicians must improve to ensure councillors feel safe and able to continue representing their residents.

This council therefore commits to challenge the normalisation of abuse against councillors and officers and uphold exemplary standards of public and political debate in all it does.

The council further reaffirms its commitment to the LGA's Debate Not Hate campaign which aims to raise public awareness of the role of councillors in local communities, encourage healthy debate and improve the response to and support those in public life facing abuse and intimidation.

In addition, this council resolves to:

- Write to the Government to ask them to work with the LGA to develop and implement a plan to address abuse and intimidation of politicians.
- Ensure the council has a clear reporting mechanism which councillors can use to monitor and record incidents of harassment and abuse of councillors and officers.
- Regularly review the support available to councillors in relation to abuse and intimidation and councillor safety.
- Work with the local police to ensure there is a clear and joined-up mechanism for reporting threats and other concerns about the safety of councillors and their families and discuss the need to take a preventative approach that accounts for the specific risks that councillors face, as they do with other high-risk individuals, like MPs.
- Take a zero-tolerance approach to abuse of councillors and officers.

The meeting adjourned at this point, having reached three hours' duration.

**(Signed)      D TRUEMAN**  
**Mayor**

