

PETERLEE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Town Council** meeting held on **Monday, 7th October 2024** at 6.30pm in the Council Chamber, Shotton Hall, Peterlee.

Present: Councillor D. Howarth (Mayor) and Councillors J Black, R. Burnip, S. Franklin, K. Hawley, A. Laing, K. Liddell, M. McCue, R. Moore, R. Scott, and S. Simpson.

Also, Present: Ian Hall, (Chief Officer and Town Clerk) and David Anderson (Locum Democratic Services Manager)

13 members of the public

C.69/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were offered from Councillors M Cartwright, K. Duffy, T. Duffy, B. Fishwick, D. Hawley, S. McDonnell, S. Meikle, D Quinn, A Stockport and E Watson.

RESOLVED: That the apologies be noted.

C.70/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors S. Franklin and R. Moore declared an interest in respect of Item No 3a 'Public Participation - East Durham Communities Standing Together', as they were members of the core group of East Durham Communities Standing Together.

Councillors D. Howarth and K. Hawley declared an interest in respect of Item No 3a 'Public Participation- East Durham Communities Standing Together' (EDCST) as they had appeared in a photo in a recent Northern Echo article regarding EDCST's campaign for the introduction of an Article 4 Declaration to manage Houses in Multiple Occupation in east Durham coastal area. Councillor Howarth stated that although she had been pictured with the group, she had an open mind and would decide how to vote following the debate on the subject.

C.71/24 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Peterlee Cricket Club

Mr James Pratt, Peterlee Cricket Club, was present at the meeting to seek assurance that the Cricket Club would not be adversely affected by the sale of Shotton Hall. The Town Clerk advised that the Cricket Club would not be directly affected by the sale. Discussions were ongoing with the Cricket Club about the ongoing support of the Town Council and how this could be developed for the future.

East Durham Communities Standing Together

Dr Brian Brown, on behalf of East Durham Communities Standing Together (EDCST), asked the Council to:-

1. Publicly state the Town Council's support for the group's campaign for the introduction of an Article 4 Declaration covering the whole of the east coast area of County Durham to manage the number of Homes of Multiple Occupation
2. Write to Durham County Council requesting that it considers the introduction of an Article 4 Declaration covering the whole of the east coast area of County Durham.
A copy of the letter to be sent to Grahame Morris MP

The group were of the opinion that without the introduction of an Article 4 Declaration to limit the number of HMO's in East Durham communities, which had ranked highly on the index of multiple deprivation for many years, the area would suffer further deterioration.

A member of the public asked how many properties had been converted to HMO's in a 5 mile radius, how many homeless people had been housed in HMO's and how many properties in the 'Richmond development' would be HMO's?

Members stated that the Town Council was not responsible for housing and therefore did not have the information requested. It was clarified that Durham County Council was responsible for housing and planning. Councillor R. Moore, on a point of information, advised that based on his research there were 5 HMO's in East Durham, of which 2 were in Peterlee.

Councillor K. Hawley spoke in favour of supporting EDCST's request and encouraged all members also to support it.

Clarification was asked as to which members could vote on the item. The Locum Democratic Services Manager advised that members who had declared an interest in the item should withdraw from the meeting and not take part.

On a vote being taken, the Council agreed to support the request. Councillor R. Moore, having declared an interest in the item, did not vote. All other members present at the meeting voting in favour.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the Council agree to support the East Durham Communities Standing Together campaign for the introduction of an Article 4 Declaration covering the whole of the east coast area of County Durham to manage the number of Homes of Multiple Occupation.
 2. That a letter be sent to Durham County Council, with a copy sent to Grahame Morris MP, requesting that it considers the introduction of an Article 4 Declaration covering the whole of the east coast area of County Durham to manage the number of Homes of Multiple Occupation.

C.72/24 MINUTES

- a. Council meeting held on 23rd September 2024

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the above meeting be approved as a correct record.

C.73/24 COMPLETION OF AUDIT YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2024

Members noted the completion of the audit process for the year ending 31 March 2024. Particular attention was drawn to the feedback given to the Auditors Letter and Annual Governance and Accountability Return, which had been circulated with the agenda, highlighting only a minor scope for improvement in 2024/25.

The letter also highlighted that whilst the Practitioners Guide 2024 did not mandate the use of .gov.uk email addresses, the External Auditor expected the Council and Councillors to have generic email address to use for official council correspondence. If this was not in place by 31 March 2025 it could result in either a qualification or other matter on the 2024/25 AGAR.

Members noted that the Notice of Conclusion of the Audit was published on 23rd September. A copy of which had been circulated with the agenda.

RESOLVED: 1. That the audited AGAR be approved and accepted.

2. That the publication of the Notice of Completion of Audit on 23rd September 2024 be noted.

C.74/24 DISMISSAL POLICY

This item had been deferred from the previous Council meeting as Members had requested additional time to consider the wording of the document. (Minute No C.60/24 refers).

Members requested that a Governance Committee be established, and this and other policies be considered by that committee once established.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That a report be submitted to the next Council meeting to establish a Governance Committee.
 2. That the Dismissal Policy be considered by the Governance Committee once established.

C.75/24 REVIEW OF AUTHORISED OFFICERS SIGNATORY LIST

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, which had been circulated with the agenda, proposing amendments to the Authorised Officers Signatory List to allow officers that were 'acting up' to be formally authorised to use a Council debit card and approve invoices, purchase orders, contracts and timesheets as detailed in the table included in the report.

It was noted that the list would be reviewed following the approval of a new staffing structure.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the proposed list of delegated authorisations be approved.
 2. That a further review be undertaken following the approval of a new staffing structure.

C.76/24 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That in accordance with the provision of Section 1 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, as amended by Section 100 of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded for the remaining item by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

C.77/24 STAFFING RESTRUCTURE - HR SUPPORT

Consideration was given to a report of the Town Clerk, which had been circulated with the agenda, proposing the provision of additional HR support to assist with the implementation of a new staffing structure when approved by Council and oversee the recruitment process.

Members were of the opinion that additional HR support should be sought from NEREO who were already supporting the restructure process.

RESOLVED: That additional HR Support be sought from NEREO if required.