

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING

31ST JULY, 2014

A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL was held at the CIVIC OFFICE, WATERDALE, DONCASTER, on THURSDAY, 31ST JULY, 2014 at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor Pat Haith
Vice-Chair - Councillor Paul Wray
Deputy Mayor - Councillor Glyn Jones

Councillors Paul Bissett, Joe Blackham, Andrew Bosmans, Elsie Butler, Paul Coddington, John Cooke, Richard Cooper-Holmes, Tony Corden, Linda Curran, Monty Cuthbert, Fred Gee, Rachel Hodson, Charlie Hogarth, Sandra Holland, Mark Houlbrook, Eva Hughes, Deborah Hutchinson, Frank Jackson, Mick Jameson, Bob Johnson, R. Allan Jones, Ted Kitchen, Pat Knight, Sue Knowles, Tracey Leyland-Jepson, Chris McGuinness, Sue McGuinness, John McHale, Hilary McNamee, Christine Mills, Bill Mordue, Jane Nightingale, Susan Phillips, Andy Pickering, Cynthia Ransome, Kevin Rodgers, Craig Sahman, Patricia Schofield, Alan Smith, Austen White, Sue Wilkinson and Jonathan Wood.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from the Mayor of Doncaster, Ros Jones and Councillors Iris Beech, Phil Cole, Nuala Fennelly, Bob Ford, Neil Gethin, James Hart, Barbara Hoyle, Alan Jones, Ken Keegan, Jane Kidd, John Mounsey, Dave Shaw, John Sheppard, Martin Williams and Yvonne Woodcock.

26. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made at the meeting.

27. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF COUNCIL HELD ON 13TH JUNE, 2014

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Annual Council meeting held on 13th June, 2014, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

28. MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 13TH JUNE, 2014

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Extraordinary Council meeting held on 13th June, 2014, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

29. TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIR OF COUNCIL, THE MAYOR, MEMBERS OF THE CABINET OR THE HEAD OF THE PAID SERVICE

The Chair of Council, Councillor Pat Haith, made the following Announcements:-

“I am pleased to invite the Mayor and Cabinet, fellow Councillors and members of the public, to join me for my ‘At Home Day’ on Friday 26th September, 2014. Everyone is welcome to come along between 10.00 a.m. and 2.00 p.m. and look around the magnificent Mansion House, see some of its treasures and enjoy a drink, a cake and a chat. I hope that you will be able to call in and be part of my day.

On behalf of the Council, I would like to welcome Councillor Paul Bissett who is attending his first Council meeting in this Municipal Year, following his recent election success at the Bye-Election on 24th July.”

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Glyn Jones, made the following announcement:-

“My announcement this evening relates to the Sheffield City Region Growth Deal which has come about through hard work that the Mayor and Officers within the Authority have put in over the last 12 months, culminating in the submission of a Growth Plan, which would compete for resources against other regions, to Government. On the 7th July, the Government announced the outcome of the completion. I am pleased to inform the Council that the Sheffield City Region secured the fifth largest Growth Deal in the Country. £297m up to 2021. This is good news for Doncaster. The funding will help deliver key infrastructure, business support and improved skills delivery within Doncaster. We have the resources to help deliver some of our major infrastructure schemes. These will create jobs and bring growth to Doncaster, including the DN7 Link Road; £14.1m, the FARRRs Phase 2; £9.1m; West Moor Link Road; £9.2M and Urban Centre; £23.9m. This is great news for Doncaster and the future prosperity of Doncaster.”

Councillor Bob Johnson, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth, Leisure and Tourism, and Veteran’s Champion, made the following announcements:-

“You may be aware and have seen in the Yorkshire Post article this week about Cusworth Hall and Sandall Beat Wood who have been awarded the prestigious ‘Green Flag Award 2014-15’, which is the National benchmark of excellence for Parks and Recreational Green Spaces (England and Wales). At Cusworth Hall, work has also started on refurbishing the historic but long neglected Walled Garden, supported by the Walled Garden Trust and an excellent group of local volunteers.

My next announcement relates to Arts Council funding and CAST, who has had incredible success, and in its first year, has achieved regional and national recognition in that it has achieved National Portfolio Organisation Status with a regular funding stream of almost £1m spread over the next 3 years, 2015-18, thus securing its position and status, which is good news for Doncaster.

In relation to Members development, Full Council and all Members may be aware that we have the Member Development Working Group looking at continuous improvements for Members. It has been identified in the Local Government Association Peer Review that we have made substantial progress and improvement in Member development. Members who sit on quasi-judicial bodies have had training provided and taken, as required. As you will be aware, Full Council approved a Member Development Plan, recommended by the cross-party Development Group, which has made it compulsory for Members who sit on Committees, to receive training on Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting, Equalities, Data Protection and Health and Safety. I am pleased to report that attendance at the training has improved. However, there are still some Members who have yet to attend.

My last announcement relates to a good news story, regarding Economic Growth. Our Strategy of a focus on apprenticeships, jobs and growth, is clearly showing results. Within the last 12 months, youth employment is down by a third, employment is up to 69%, up from 66%. I am sure that Members will agree with me that the Mayor's commitment on apprenticeships, jobs and business growth, should be strongly supported by Full Council."

Councillor Christine Mills, Cabinet Member for Housing, Environment and Waste, made the following announcement:-

"The Homes and Communities Agency has granted in full, the bids to support our Council House Build and Empty Homes Property programmes over the next three years. £2.18m will provide the maximum match funding for the investment sums agreed in the budget earlier this year. A range of properties will be provided across the Borough delivering 123 new build units. Properties will be managed by St. Leger Homes and let under the Choice Based Lettings Scheme. The new schemes continue the provision of housing and further bids will be made later in the year."

The Chief Executive, Jo Miller, made the following announcements:-

"Dave Hamilton will be joining us on Monday as the new Director of Adults and Social Care, who was appointed unanimously. Dr. Tony Baxter has been acting as interim Director of Adults and Social Care. I look forward to seeing him.

In relation to the High Speed Rail College, Doncaster has put in a bid to site the Rail College in Doncaster. In Doncaster, we are putting in the bid with Sheffield City Region Local Enterprise Partnership and the private sector led Centre for Rail Engineering and Technical Excellence.

We have won the support from every Local Enterprise Partnership in the North and Yorkshire MPs including, Rosie Winterton, and Barry Sheerman MP and Andrew Percy MP, from the All Party Parliamentary Yorkshire and North Lincolnshire Group.

Members will also like to know that a task force report will also be published.

We have been vociferous about the Rail College in the press and we had hoped to have the result of where the site will be, whether it will be Doncaster, Birmingham, Derby or Manchester, by the Parliamentary recess last week or by 24th July. Locating the Rail College in Doncaster would up-skill our workforce. The decision is now likely to be announced at the end of September. We, along with Doncaster College, Sheffield University and the Chambers of Commerce, have undertaken a tremendous amount of lobbying. I've made this announcement this evening as I promised to report back to Council on the outcome, because we want to bring the Rail College to Doncaster."

30. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 13

(a) Question from Mr. D. Wright, to the Mayor of Doncaster, Ros Jones:-

"The Mayor's decision last year to have statements and questions at Cabinet meetings has worked well.

Will the Mayor now consider the following at Cabinet meetings:-

Where a statement/question has been put to the Mayor, after a Cabinet Member has replied, the same member of the public shall have up to two and half minutes to present a right of reply, either at Item 2 of the Cabinet agenda or at the appropriate part of the Cabinet agenda itself?"

On behalf of the Mayor, who was not in attendance at the meeting due to personal reasons, the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Glyn Jones, gave the following reply:-

"Thank you for your question Mr. Wright.

The Mayor is pleased that you feel the revisions that the Mayor made to the procedure at Cabinet meetings to allow both public questions and statements prior to consideration of formal business, are operating effectively.

The Mayor makes herself accessible as possible and I believe that the current arrangements are working well. In addition to the frequent Cabinet meetings, there are also a wide range of other opportunities for members of the public to ask questions or raise concerns with the Mayor either by:-

- Placing a question on notice at Full Council meetings;

- Arranging a one-to-one meeting at one of the Mayor's monthly 'Meet the Mayor' events; and
- By email or in writing.

A number of people have even contacted the Mayor by Twitter and she does her best to respond to those interactions.

Given the wide range of opportunities people have to enter into a dialogue with the Mayor, she doesn't intend to extend the current arrangements.

Members of the public who regularly attend Cabinet will be aware that on several occasions, the Mayor has used her discretion and extended the 20 minute period for questions and statements, and she will continue to do this where required, to ensure that those who attend who want to ask a question or make a statement, are given an adequate opportunity to do so.

Once again, thank you for raising this issue.”

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13.10, Mr. Wright asked the Deputy Mayor, the following supplementary question:-

“Thank you for your response Councillor Jones. I agree with the Mayor that arrangements are working well however, I believe that it does not work well in certain situations. The Cabinet make decisions in terms of policy on a regular basis and this is the right place to do so.

In respect of the wide range of other opportunities for members of the public to ask questions or raise concerns with the Mayor, regarding the first point, there is no provision to make statements at Council meetings. Secondly, one-to-one meetings are fine for people in the locality. In relation to the third point, I personally don't like to correspond by email.

At yesterday's Cabinet meeting, I raised issues regarding Libraries and put my case forward. Later on, an Officer answered the point I raised, but I am not allowed to have two and a half minutes to have a right of reply, which I believe is a democratic right. I am disappointed that the Mayor is not allowing this simple request, especially when Cabinet meetings only last for 20 to 30 minutes. Will the Mayor reconsider this in light of my remarks in order to have proper democracy in place for the people to be able to have two and half minutes to ask a question at Cabinet meetings?”

The Deputy Mayor gave the following reply:-

“Thank you Mr. Wright for your supplementary question.

The key function at Cabinet meetings is to carefully consider and discuss important issues in the Borough. The Mayor will use her discretion and this is as it stands at the present time.”

(b) Question from Mr. T. McCready B.Sc, to the Mayor of Doncaster, Ros Jones:-

“Given that question time sessions for members of the public will only be allowed in 4 Council meetings during the Municipal Year 2014/15, will the Mayor agree to change the Doncaster Council Constitution, to allow for questions on the agenda for the Annual meeting of the Council and/or the Budget Setting Council meeting for the Municipal Year 2015/16?

At a previous annual meeting, an issue had arisen with a citizen of the Borough. This issue was raised with the previous Elected Mayor as a direct communication. With hindsight, it would have been satisfactory for this Council tax payer to have had the opportunity to ask a public question in his ‘hour of need’.”

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Glyn Jones, gave the following reply:-

“Thank you for your question Mr. McCready.

Enabling members of the public to ask questions in public is an important part of ensuring that we have a strong, open and transparent local democracy.

During the current Municipal Year, there are six scheduled meetings of Full Council planned; in fact five of these meetings are classed as ordinary meetings, where members of the public are able to submit a question.

The sixth meeting is the Annual Council meeting, which is primarily ceremonial. At the moment, in common with many Local Authorities, only statutory business is conducted at this meeting.

I should make clear that decisions on the number of meetings of Council and changes to the Council’s Constitution, rest with Full Council and not with the Mayor.

I am not familiar with the individual circumstances that you refer to, but I would point out that in addition to Council meetings, there are many ways in which questions can be directed to the Mayor or Cabinet Members. These include, public meetings of Cabinet which are held every 2 weeks or so.

I do however, recognise that members of the public may also wish to direct their question to the Chair of a Regulatory Committee. If Council agrees, the Mayor will ask that your proposal is considered as part of the next review of the Council’s Constitution.”

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13.10, Mr. McCready asked the Deputy Mayor, the following supplementary question:-

“I’d like to thank Mayor Jones for her response.

I agree with the Mayor that it is important to have questions, otherwise this would show signs of tyranny.”

In response, the Deputy Mayor thanked Mr. McCready for his supplementary question.

31. YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE PLAN 2014/15

The Council considered a report, presented by Councillor Tony Corden, Cabinet Member for Support to Lead Member for Children’s Services with a focus on Safeguarding, which sought approval of a new strategic Youth Offending Service (YOS) Plan for 2014/15, for the Youth Offending Service in Doncaster. The Plan was considered and supported by Cabinet at its meeting held on 30th April, 2014.

Members noted that the plan set out the resourcing and value for money, challenges to future provision, structure and governance, partnership arrangements and risks to future delivery for the service. In relation to these, actions and timescales were set to develop the service and ensure the best service for the children and young people of Doncaster.

It was reported that the Doncaster YOS had performed well during the previous year, having managed a very difficult remand overspend with no additional funding, achieved a 100% accommodation target for the full year for young people leaving custody as well as increasing its percentage of young engaged in employment training and education to over 80. At the same time, the number of people going to court had reduced yet again, below national achievements. The use of remand and custody had proved a more difficult challenge with figures remaining constant throughout the year. However, the YOS was still delivering within national standards as a whole service. A Youth Justice Board Performance Check in March 2014, showed Doncaster as a ‘green’ service not requiring any form of support or intervention.

Councillor Corden summarised the main points contained in the YOS Plan and drew Members attention to the following issues:-

- The YOS was fully incorporated into Doncaster’s Children’s Services and was making preparation for its move into the Children’s Trust. The Head of Service now reported directly to the Assistant Director responsible for Safeguarding and had recently taken responsibility for Integrated Family Support Services. This was resulting in a much improved workflow between YOS and other services, and ensured that the YOS truly worked in partnership with all relevant agencies. It had meant that the emphasis on delivery was now stronger in the area of risk and vulnerability management, and safeguarding of young people.

- The major amendments and additions in this year's plan included:-
 - (i) The introduction of a dedicated Police Officer to work alongside Care Homes in Doncaster, to help reduce Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing from Home events; and
 - (ii) The introduction of Family Support work.
- Doncaster's re-offending rates for the period ending March, 2013, showed that from a cohort of 88 young people who had offended during 2013, only 39 re-offended during the period. The number of the young people being sentenced at court had again reduced. However, those that attended court and sent to custody remained high which was a cause for concern. The use of remand in custody was also high in Doncaster, but the plan sought to address this. This was particularly important following the pressure on the funds transferred by Government to Local Authorities in April.
- The Employment, Education and Training figures had risen well during the year and the YOS had a really strong 100% outturn for the provision of accommodation.
- The YOS continued to work closely with all its partners to ensure that public confidence continued to increase and young offenders were being effectively helped and managed. This was enhanced by the work being undertaken with those young people, subject to Police cautions and conditional cautions.

Councillor Corden was pleased to report that compared to five years ago, there were fewer offences known to have been committed by children and young people.

In conclusion, Councillor Corden reported that the YOS in Doncaster, provided a strong robust service to the community and the plan ensured that the Council had the tools to develop an even better one. The plan identified a number of areas for improved delivery and the Council had now developed sustainable Action Plans to address these issues.

During consideration of the report, Councillor Bob Johnson, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth, Leisure and Tourism, and Veterans Champion, congratulated the YOS for delivering a good service for Doncaster.

Following Members being afforded the opportunity to comment on the report, Councillor R. Allan Jones sought clarity on a number of points including:-

- in relation to the second paragraph of Page 21 of the Doncaster YOS Plan 2014/15, what was meant by the sentence "The direction of travel remains uncertain due to the financial climate and potential political change which may also affect future priorities of the Government";

- with regard to the key performance indicators, set out at Section 10 of the YOS Plan, how were these measured compared to that of previous years and how did they relate to the current position; and
- in respect of the figures detailed within the report, how many of the young people who had offended, were children in care.

In response, Councillor Tony Corden thanked Councillor Jones for his questions and stated that he did not have the figures to hand in respect of the number of children in care. However, he assured Councillor Jones that the information he was seeking would be forwarded to him and undertook to provide Councillor Jones with a written response. Councillor Corden pointed out that the figures did show that there had been a reduction in the number of offences.

RESOLVED that the Youth Offending Service Plan for 2014/15, be approved.

32. COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY

The Council received a report, presented by Councillor Joe Blackham, Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Neighbourhoods, which outlined the Safer Stronger Doncaster Partnership priorities in 2014/15, contained within the Community Safety Strategy, as attached at Appendix A of the report.

Members were informed that the Community Safety Strategy was a Statutory Plan under the Crime and Disorder Act 1989. In order to meet the requirements of the Council's Budget and Policy Framework, there was a requirement for the Plan to be considered by Full Council. The report and priorities had been considered by a range of groups and agencies within, and external to the Council. The report was also considered and supported by Cabinet at its meeting on 18th June, 2014.

It was reported that Community Safety was one of the Council's key priorities which affected all Wards and residents. Adoption of the strategy would provide a framework for the Council to guide its partnership activity to reduce crime and disorder, and improve community safety over the period 2014 to 2017. Implementation of the strategy effectively would help Doncaster thrive, helping drive down business crime, improve the economy and enhance the health and well-being of all residents.

Members' attention was drawn to the specific priorities for the Safer Stronger Doncaster Partnership which had been identified through the production of the Joint Strategic Intelligence Assessment and refreshed accordingly. The priorities for the 2014-2017 strategy, had been identified as:-

- Protecting vulnerable people;
- Reducing crime, anti-social behaviour and re-offending; and

- Reduce substance and alcohol misuse and the associated effects on crime.

The priorities were managed by the work of the Safer Stronger Doncaster Partnership Theme Groups, ensuring a dedicated focus on the cross-cutting areas of:-

- Substance Misuse (including alcohol);
- Anti-Social Behaviour;
- Serious Acquisitive Crime and reducing re-offending;
- Domestic Violence and Abuse; and
- Sexual Violence and Abuse.

It was reported that whilst overall crime in Doncaster had fallen during the lifetime of the previous strategy and was now around its lowest level for thirty years, some significant challenges remained across all priority areas. The Strategy outlined what residents could expect from the Partnership over the period 2014-2017, and the methods that would be used to achieve them.

Members noted that a feature of the strategy was the completion of the first Borough wide community safety consultation, which engaged with over 600 residents, both face to face and on-line. This consultation, which would be completed yearly through the lifetime of the strategy, would be combined with the high level intelligence assessment data already used, to better inform service delivery at an individual neighbourhood level.

Following the presentation of the report, Members were afforded the opportunity to comment on the strategy.

RESOLVED that the contents and priorities within the Community Safety Strategy, be endorsed.

33. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14

The Council considered the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report presented by Councillor Hilary McNamee, Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC), which highlighted the progress of Doncaster Council's Overview and Scrutiny function during 2013/14 and also identified priorities for Overview and Scrutiny for 2014/15.

Members were informed that the Annual Report provided a short summary of some of the work carried out by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and its three standing Panels during 2013/14, and highlighted some of the key achievements and impacts which had been made by Overview and Scrutiny over the past year.

Councillor McNamee drew Members attention to the key impacts and achievements which had arisen from the work of Overview and Scrutiny, which included all aspects of the Overview and Scrutiny process, policy review and development, reviewing performance, holding decision makers to account and reviewing the work of partners.

Councillor McNamee also highlighted some of the key features of the new structure and new working arrangements which had been put in place for Overview and Scrutiny for 2014/15 and beyond, which included:-

- OSMC would cover all areas of Council/partnership/statutory activity, (except health), rather than just Finance and Corporate Services issues, and would now meet monthly;
- OSMC would agree, manage and co-ordinate the work plans for the standing Panels who would undertake a small number of in-depth reviews on important issues identified by OSMC. Ad-hoc cross-cutting Groups could also be established to undertake specific work;
- A new Panel had been established to consider issues relating to Health and Adult Social Care, which would take on the statutory health scrutiny roles;
- Panels had more flexibility to undertake their work in accordance with an agreed timescale. Meeting dates would be set to accommodate the review, rather than being fixed in the diary in advance; and
- The Panel structure would include:-
 - Children and Young People;
 - Regeneration and Housing;
 - Community and Environment; and
 - Health and Adult Social Care.

Members were informed that the Chairs, Vice-Chairs and Panel Members were working hard to ensure that they focused their efforts on important issues that would bring about quality outcomes and support the Council in responding to significant budget challenges, and increased demand for some of the core services.

In conclusion, Councillor McNamee expressed her thanks to Elected Members, the Executive, partners, stakeholders and the public, who had taken the time to attend meetings and contribute to the Overview and Scrutiny process last year, and she hoped that Overview and Scrutiny would continue to build on its successes.

Following the presentation of the report, Members were afforded the opportunity to comment on the report.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2013/14, be noted.

34. NOMINATION OF REPRESENTATIVES TO THE SHEFFIELD CITY REGION COMBINED AUTHORITY'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Council considered a report which sought two nominated representatives of the Council, to serve on the Sheffield City Region Combined Authority's (SCRCA) Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Members noted that at the meeting of Council on 7th March 2013, it was agreed that Doncaster Council would join the SCRCA, which became a legal entity on 1st April, 2014. In addition to the Member representative appointments previously agreed, the Council had now been asked to nominate two representatives to sit on the SCRCA's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Combined Authority had agreed to establish an 'optimum sized' 14 member Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Combined Authority, which was proportionally representative of the Sheffield City Region, post the 2014 local elections. The Committee would be made up of 9 Members from the Labour Group, 2 Conservative Members, 1 Liberal Democrat, 1 UKIP and 1 Independent. On this basis, Doncaster Council's representation on the SCRCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee was 1 Labour Group representative and 1 Conservative Group representative.

Following consultation with Group Leaders, Councillor John Mounsey had been nominated as the Labour Group representative on the SCRCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee. At the time of drafting the report, a nomination had not been received from the Conservative Group.

Subsequently, upon seeking a nominated representative from the Conservative Group, it was proposed that Councillor R. Allan Jones be appointed as the Group's representative on the SCRCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED that Councillors John Mounsey and R. Allan Jones, be appointed to the Sheffield City Region Combined Authority's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

35. TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING MOTION, WRITTEN NOTICE OF WHICH HAS BEEN GIVEN BY COUNCILLOR JOHN MCHALE AND SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR SUE PHILLIPS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 16.1

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 16.1, a Motion was submitted by Councillor John McHale and Seconded by Councillor Sue Phillips:-

"In 2010, Doncaster Council was placed in government intervention after a Corporate Governance Inspection was undertaken by the Audit Commission.

However, the recent Corporate Peer Review undertaken by a distinguished team of Local Government experts, concluded that Doncaster Council is now functioning well, in a manner consistent with that to be expected in other Local Authorities.

The report comments that:-

- Governance and capacity have improved.
- The organisation is now stable and that a key factor in this new stability is the leadership of Mayor Jones and her Cabinet, supported by the Chief Executive and her officers.
- Overview and Scrutiny is improving, is more closely aligned to strategic priorities and has clearer commitment from Elected Members.
- According to staff, there has been a “sea change” in the culture, enabling them to do their jobs better.
- Statutory and community partners have reported a step change in the way the Council engages with them, particularly since the 2013 elections.
- The active involvement of Mayor Jones and the Chief Executive is credited with securing a number of significant infrastructure projects and inward investment schemes within the Borough.

This Council supports the conclusions of the Peer Review and the confirmation that significant improvements have been made at Doncaster Council.

Furthermore, this Council welcomes the written statement made following the Corporate Peer Review, by Rt. Hon Eric Pickles MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government that:-

‘Given the level of improvement that Doncaster has now achieved, their firm plans for the future and their readiness to engage with the wider Local Government sector on improvement, continuing the statutory corporate intervention will add little, if any, value.

Accordingly, I intend to bring the statutory corporate intervention to an early close.’

This Council would also like to place on record it’s thanks to all who have contributed to the achievement of the improvements made, particularly the lead Commissioner Rob Sykes, who finished in his role at the end of June.

And this Council is committed to building on the recent success by delivering new jobs and high quality, value for money public services which benefit the people of Doncaster.”

The Chair afforded all Members in the Chamber, the opportunity to speak on the Motion.

A vote was taken on the proposed Motion by Councillor John McHale, which was declared as follows:-

For – 34

Against – 4

Abstentions – 4

On being put to the meeting, the Motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED that

In 2010, Doncaster Council was placed in government intervention after a Corporate Governance Inspection was undertaken by the Audit Commission.

However, the recent Corporate Peer Review undertaken by a distinguished team of Local Government experts, concluded that Doncaster Council is now functioning well, in a manner consistent with that to be expected in other Local Authorities.

The report comments that:-

- Governance and capacity have improved.
- The organisation is now stable and that a key factor in this new stability is the leadership of Mayor Jones and her Cabinet, supported by the Chief Executive and her officers.
- Overview and Scrutiny is improving, is more closely aligned to strategic priorities and has clearer commitment from Elected Members.
- According to staff, there has been a “sea change” in the culture, enabling them to do their jobs better.
- Statutory and community partners have reported a step change in the way the Council engages with them, particularly since the 2013 elections.
- The active involvement of Mayor Jones and the Chief Executive is credited with securing a number of significant infrastructure projects and inward investment schemes within the Borough.

This Council supports the conclusions of the Peer Review and the confirmation that significant improvements have been made at Doncaster Council.

Furthermore, this Council welcomes the written statement made following the Corporate Peer Review, by Rt. Hon Eric Pickles MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government that:-

'Given the level of improvement that Doncaster has now achieved, their firm plans for the future and their readiness to engage with the wider Local Government sector on improvement, continuing the statutory corporate intervention will add little, if any, value.

Accordingly, I intend to bring the statutory corporate intervention to an early close.'

This Council would also like to place on record it's thanks to all who have contributed to the achievement of the improvements made, particularly the lead Commissioner Rob Sykes, who finished in his role at the end of June.

And this Council is committed to building on the recent success by delivering new jobs and high quality, value for money public services which benefit the people of Doncaster.

36. QUESTIONS BY ELECTED MEMBERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES 15.2 AND 15.3

A. Questions on Notice

No questions on notice from Elected Members, had been received for this meeting.

B. Questions Without Notice

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15.2, the Chair accepted the following questions from Elected Members during 'Question Time':-

A. Questions to Ros Jones, Mayor of Doncaster

In the absence of Ros Jones, no questions were put to the Mayor of Doncaster.

A. Questions to the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Glyn Jones, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Equalities and Cohesion

Q. Councillor R. Allan Jones asked the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Glyn Jones:-

"In relation to the Sheffield City Region Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Growth Deal, Derbyshire Council has been awarded £3m regarding rural issues and economic development. We seem to have come to an issue of urban areas, of which Doncaster is 60% rural. We should work with the LEP to take on these rural areas. How did Derbyshire Council obtain the £3m and how had this been identified as rural area development?"

A. The Deputy Mayor gave the following response:-

“I do not have this information to hand. I would not disagree with you regarding rural aspects within Doncaster. Many areas within Doncaster are rural, with Doncaster being the largest Metropolitan Borough in the UK. Some areas are poorly served by transport links. Transport will benefit some of the Authority’s outlying areas.”

Q. Councillor Cynthia Ransome asked the Deputy Mayor:-

“In relation to the questions from members of the public today regarding fewer Council meetings, how does this sit with Ed Milliband’s proposal to have Parliamentary questions weekly?”

A. The Deputy Mayor gave the following response:-

“The Government is starting to catch up with us. We did have more Council meetings in the past, but the number was reduced under the previous Mayor, but we can look at the number of Council meetings to see how we can involve the public more?”

Q. Councillor Jonathan Wood asked the Deputy Mayor:-

“Councillor Jones, you said earlier today that you were all about being open and transparent in the Council Chamber and for people to be able to see what’s going on, but I can’t see many members of the public in attendance today.

We as Councillors, are here today to endorse the yellow papers on the agenda (minutes of the South Yorkshire Pensions Authority meeting on 19th June, 2014) in relation to Minute No.17, which refers to webcasting the meetings of the Pensions Authority. The minutes make reference to Members being reminded that webcasting is an excellent way to ensure transparency of decision making and good governance, which enables engagement to be made with stakeholders through associated social media. It was also noted in these minutes that the renewal of the contract was subject to the agreement of all webcasting partners, including Doncaster, Rotherham, Sheffield and Barnsley, which was a joint agreement that all the meetings are webcasted, so that people can see what’s taking place and make a judgement on the decisions being made.

Mayor Jones had stated previously that if I could obtain sponsorship for the broadcasting of Council meetings held in this Chamber, she would go ahead and do it. We in Doncaster are a closed Council and we have the technology to do this, so when will we stop hiding things?”

A. The Deputy Mayor gave the following response:-

“Eric Pickles is intending that all Authorities record meetings. There will be a significant cost to do this, but I don’t think that we have the authority to stream this and I believe that it will be something in the region of £20,000 to put this forward. I am in favour of doing this and I’m sure that when Eric Pickles implements this, the Council will have this in place, as this will be a statutory requirement.”

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15.7, Councillor Jonathan Wood asked the Deputy Mayor, the following supplementary question:-

Q. “You have said Councillor Jones that we will do this, but why can’t you show some leadership and endorse what Eric Pickles has said. Are we going to do this before the statutory regulations come in or are we going to do so when we are forced to do it?”

A. The Deputy Mayor gave the following response:-

“If it is something sensible, we will do it.”

Q. Councillor Alan Smith asked the Deputy Mayor:-

“A question that I often get asked by my constituents is how much the Mayor receives from the Council. In her Mayoral role, is there any further remuneration i.e., as a Leader of a Group?”

A. The Deputy Mayor gave the following response:-

“Following a recent conversation with the Mayor, I have been assured that she does not receive a penny over £30,000.”

The Chief Executive, Jo Miller, reaffirmed the response provided by the Deputy Mayor and advised the Chamber that this was a matter of public record, which was detailed within the Members’ Allowance Scheme.

C. Questions to Councillor Joe Blackham, Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Neighbourhoods

No questions were put to Councillor Blackham, Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Neighbourhoods.

D. Questions to Councillor Tony Corden, Cabinet Member, Support to Lead Member for Children's Services with a focus on Safeguarding

No questions were put to Councillor Tony Corden, Cabinet Member, Support to Lead Member for Children's Services with a focus on Safeguarding.

E. Questions to Councillor Nuala Fennelly, Cabinet Lead Member for Children's Services

In the absence of Councillor Nuala Fennelly, Cabinet Lead Member for Children's Services, the Chair of Council informed Members that any questions for Councillor Fennelly should be submitted in writing to the Executive Office after this meeting and that the Cabinet Member would respond accordingly.

F. Questions to Councillor Bob Johnson, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth, Leisure and Tourism, and Veteran's Champion

No questions were put to Councillor Bob Johnson, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth, Leisure and Tourism, and Veteran's Champion.

In reference to an announcement made by Councillor Johnson earlier in the meeting, Councillor Cynthia Ransome took the opportunity to congratulate Councillor Johnson and the volunteers of Cusworth Hall and Sandall Beat Wood, in receiving the prestigious Green Flag Award.

G. Questions to Councillor Pat Knight, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care

No questions were put to Councillor Pat Knight, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care.

H. Questions to Councillor Christine Mills, Cabinet Member for Housing, Environment and Waste

No questions were put to Councillor Christine Mills, Cabinet Member for Housing, Environment and Waste.

I. Questions to Councillor Bill Mordue, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation

No questions were put to Councillor Bill Mordue, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation.

J. Questions to Councillor John Mounsey, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

In the absence of Councillor John Mounsey, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, the Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, Councillor Hilary McNamee, answered the following questions from Members on his behalf:-

Q. Councillor Jonathan Wood asked Councillor Hilary McNamee:-

“We have heard today about the work of Overview and Scrutiny over the coming year, where you have stated that anyone can ask questions at Overview and Scrutiny meetings, but only Elected Members can vote. You have also said that it is only Overview and Scrutiny who can decide what it wants to look at. I believe that its time that Overview and Scrutiny looked at ‘Value for Money’ and what it looks like, so that the public can see it and know what it’s about.

There has been a process of consultation this week regarding the proposal to modernise Day Service Provision and the proposal to close the Council’s seven Residential Care Homes for older people, which excluded public evidence as part of the Overview and Scrutiny Call-in process. The public were excluded under Sections 5, 7 and 9 of the Overview and Scrutiny Call-in Procedure. I don’t know how you have missed the 27,500 people who have signed the petition against the proposed closures. How, following receipt of the petition, have you still chosen to ignore them?”

A. Councillor McNamee gave the following response:-

“Thank you, Councillor Wood for your question.

It is not Overview and Scrutiny who decides the work plan. Each respective Scrutiny Panel submit their suggestions to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee.

Regarding ‘Value for Money’, I am not sure what you mean by this. I can ask Overview and Scrutiny to put this issue on their work programme.

In respect of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee Call-in meeting regarding the Proposal to close the Council’s seven Residential Care Homes for older people, I am not going through this issue again. All concerned have had every opportunity to be consulted on this proposal. The Call-in process is about presenting new evidence, not advising members of the public to present information on your behalf.”

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15.7, Councillor Jonathan Wood asked Councillor McNamee, the following supplementary question:-

Q. "Under Sections 5, 7 and 9 of the Overview and Scrutiny Call-in Procedure, I believe that there is reference to being able to call expert witnesses. Overview and Scrutiny chose not to do this and chose to exclude expert testimony?"

A. Councillor McNamee gave the following response:-

"It was not a decision made on my own. It was a majority decision."

37. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION – PEER REVIEW REPORT

The Council considered a report, presented by the Chief Executive, Jo Miller, which outlined the positive feedback received following a Peer Review which was undertaken by the Local Government Association from the 16th to 20th June, 2014, to assess the Council's progress since the Corporate Governance Inspection in 2010.

Members noted that the Peer Review report gave positive feedback and endorsed the Council's position. The Peers had commented that the Council was now functioning well and in a manner consistent with that to be expected in other Local Authorities. The Council was looking up and speaking with greater confidence and optimism for the future, but it was recognised that the Council needed to do more to improve further. The Peer Review recommendations would be put into action by Senior Officers, the Executive and Members, forming part of corporate planning.

A copy of a letter from the Rt Hon Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, was tabled at the meeting for Members' information. The letter made reference to the recent Peer Review findings where the Secretary of State had announced his intention to bring the statutory intervention placed on the Council in 2010, to come to an early close.

Members noted that the Intervention would now end when the Children's Services Trust was established in September, rather than in July 2015 as originally planned. In his letter, the Secretary of State considered that given the improvement that Doncaster had now achieved, its firm plans for the future and readiness to engage with the wider Local Government sector on improvement, continuing the statutory corporate intervention would add little, if any, value.

Following the presentation of the report, Members were afforded the opportunity to comment on the report.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the findings of the Peer Review report, be noted; and
- (2) the work to continue to improve, be supported.

38. MINUTES OF THE JOINT AUTHORITIES

RESOLVED that the Minutes and Briefing Notes of the following Joint Authorities, be noted:-

- A. South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel held on 31st January, 31st March and 2nd May, 2014.
- B. South Yorkshire Integrated Transport Authority held on 6th March, 2014 and the Sheffield City Region Combined Authority held on 22nd April and 2nd June, 2014.
- C. South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority held on 17th February, 31st March, 28th April, 2nd June, 30th June (Annual) and 30th June (Ordinary) 2014 and Section 41 Briefing Notes for March, April and July 2014.
- D. South Yorkshire Pensions Authority held on 13th February, 20th March, 19th June (Annual) and 19th June (Ordinary) 2014.