

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING

25TH SEPTEMBER, 2014

A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL was held at the CIVIC OFFICE, WATERDALE, DONCASTER, on THURSDAY, 25TH SEPTEMBER, 2014 at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT:

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

Councillors Iris Beech, Paul Bissett, Susan Bolton, Andrew Bosmans, Elsie Butler, Paul Coddington, Phil Cole, Richard Cooper-Holmes, Linda Curran, Monty Cuthbert, Nuala Fennelly, Bob Ford, Fred Gee, James Hart, Rachel Hodson, Charlie Hogarth, Mark Houlbrook, Eva Hughes, Frank Jackson, Mick Jameson, Bob Johnson, Alan Jones, R. Allan Jones, Ken Keegan, Jane Kidd, Ted Kitchen, Sue Knowles, Tracey Leyland-Jepson, John McHale, Hilary McNamee, Christine Mills, John Mounsey Jane Nightingale, Andy Pickering, Cynthia Ransome, Kevin Rodgers, Patricia Schofield, Dave Shaw, John Sheppard, Alan Smith, Austen White, Sue Wilkinson, Jonathan Wood and Yvonne Woodcock.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Joe Blackham, John Cooke, Tony Corden, Sandra Holland, Barbara Hoyle, Deborah Hutchinson, Pat Knight, Chris McGuinness, Sue McGuinness, Bill Mordue, Susan Phillips, Tony Revill, Craig Sahman and Martin Williams.

39. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Members Code of Conduct, Councillor Mark Houlbrook declared a Non-disclosable Pecuniary Interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 7, 'Decision on the Progress of the Sites and Policies Development Plan Document', by virtue of being the Chair of Thorne and Moorends Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

40. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 31ST JULY, 2014

Prior to the previous Minutes being ratified, Councillor Ted Kitchen referred to the vote taken in relation to the Motion on Notice by Councillor John McHale which was Seconded by Councillor Sue Phillips, (Minute No. 34). Councillor Kitchen apologised unreservedly to Councillor McHale for inadvertently voting against the Motion and wished that his apologies be placed on record.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 31st July, 2014, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

41. 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 have received a phone call from Councillor Pat Knight's husband today. Pat wishes to pass on her thanks to the people who have sent her messages of support.

Can I also remind fellow Councillors and members of the public that it is my 'At Home Day' tomorrow, Friday 26th September, 2014. Everyone is welcome to come along between 10.00 a.m. and 2.00 p.m. and view the Mansion House and see some of its treasures."

The Mayor of Doncaster, Ros Jones, made the following announcement:-

"I am pleased to announce that as a Council, we have received the 'Local Authority of the Year Award' for jobs and growth. Doncaster is open for Business. Many thanks to the staff involved in this in particular, Lee Tillman and Neil Firth. The event was run by Insider Business Publication South Yorkshire. Other finalists were Hull and Wakefield. Thanks again to the staff and everyone involved in bringing growth to the Borough."

Councillor Nuala Fennelly, Cabinet Lead Member for Children's Services, announced that she would be speaking on Agenda Item No. 8 after the Director of Children's Services had spoken.

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

"I would briefly like to update colleagues on the progress and current position regarding Regeneration and Development growth after some 12 months of the Economic Growth Plan published in September 2013.

The Economic Growth Plan gave Doncaster a better and different focus, in particular, on our longstanding engineering and manufacturing base, and for the first time included the rail sector.

The economic plan and through our direct engagement with Sheffield City Region and the Local Enterprise Partnership, ensured we influenced the SCR Growth Plan as presented to Government. Doncaster is now recognised as having potential growth in engineering and rail engineering, bringing high value jobs to our area.

We now have in place the Rail Sector Group led by senior people from the private sector rail companies supported by Business Doncaster.

Multi million pound contracts have been secured by Doncaster companies.

Hitachi, Trackwork Moll and Rhomberg Sersa, have all chosen to invest in Doncaster. WABTEC now employ over 1000 people and continue to grow and train substantial numbers of engineering apprentices.

In addition, Doncaster is shortlisted for the Rail College, to train the next generation of rail engineers.

Several major projects have been delivered or are underway:-

- The new Theatre, CAST has completed its first full year with visitor numbers exceeding expectation (over 70,000) and has received excellent reviews locally and nationally;
- FARRRS is under construction, it will open up the potential for £1.7 billion of private investment bringing some 10,000 jobs and 5,000 new homes;
- Construction has started on the £400m IPORT – a project of national significance;
- The Airport business park has now Enterprise Zone status and is open for business;
- 4 of the 15 SCRIF across SCR are Doncaster's. DN7 has achieved Stage 1 approval which will open up the potential for 8,000 jobs and 1200 homes; and
- The revitalised Doncaster Market launched at the St Leger Festival is already seeing a positive impact.

The current economic position has substantially improved:-

- Economic output has increased by almost £200m whilst SCR as a whole, has reduced by almost £700m;
- Employment is now close to pre-recession levels at just over 69%. For the first time in at least 10 years, over 130,000 people are in employment;
- Job Seeker claimants are at the lowest level for 6 years. There has been 2,819 less claiming JSA than 12 months ago which is a 30% reduction;

- 1,745 18-24 (Young People) are claiming JSA, a rate of 6.7%, which is 1000 less than a year ago which is a 30% reduction;
- Visitor economy continues to expand with 15% growth last year, compared to a 5% increase across England;
- Lakeside is now a venue of choice for the European Jet Ski Championship. Doncaster was mentioned in the Dubai newspapers which are main sponsors for the Euro Championships; and
- Our first, for a number of years, major cycle festival attracted thousands of visitors and excellent reviews.

Looking ahead, we must ensure we continue to drive Doncaster's economic growth and reflect our ambitions:-

- Attendance at MIPIM event and other such international events allows Doncaster to show what we have to offer;
- The Business Showcase Month was a huge success;
- Increasing the amount of public sector spend in the local economy;
- Targeting and supporting inward investors and business to recruit and train local people;
- We are exceeding the Mayor Apprenticeship target of 750 and are challenging to achieve 1000; and
- Master planning is helping to identify the next generation of landmark projects.

We have the opportunity and must be bolder with a wider economic perspective.

Doncaster has the assets, projects and shared commitments to support the North of England in becoming an economic 'powerhouse', but we can only do it in partnership."

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

"Thank you, Chair.

I would like to take the opportunity to inform Council about the recent external assessment of St. Leger Homes with regard to the Social Housing Equality Framework measurement.

The assessment is carried out looking at five criteria:-

- Knowing your customers;
- Leadership, partnership and organisational commitment;
- Involving customers;
- Responsive services, access and customer care; and
- A skilled and committed workforce.

I am pleased to say that the overall outcome was a judgement of Excellence.”

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

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

“Staff morale at Council Care Homes is suffering due to the Council’s decision to close its homes. Disclosures made to myself and the latest CQC report into Rose House reflect this predictable trend.

Anxiety about the unresolved review process means staff are taking sick leave, to be replaced by relief workers. This treatment of loyal staff is disgraceful and undermines guarantees made by Cabinet Members on 25th June.

When will the Council stop treating major stakeholders with utter contempt. When will staff, residents and families become central to the decision-making process when not just jobs, but lives are being risked?”

The Mayor of Doncaster, Ros Jones, gave the following reply:-

“I would like to thank Mr. Morgan for his question.

After listening to the views that residents and family members raised during the consultation period on the future of Council Care Homes, Cabinet decided to delay the proposed care home closures. This was in order try and identify alternative providers, so that residents do not need to leave their current home. This decision was taken with the best intentions, to find an alternative solution to closure.

I understand that this brings with it a degree of uncertainty and can be a worrying time for those affected. However, I understand that staff members continue to receive a fortnightly briefing, keeping them informed of the steps we are taking. Staff members are also advised to, and able to, seek support from their Registered Manager.

We are continuing to take steps to ensure that our homes operate in a way where the safety of residents is paramount.

In order to provide safe cover in our Care Homes, when staff are absent, there may be a need to use others who are available for work. This may include care staff from the relief pool, in addition to staff working additional hours.

Residents and relatives will shortly be receiving a letter confirming progress to date, and discussions with me, Cabinet Members and Officers, on the way forward is continuing.”

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

“I would like to thank the Mayor for her response.

I would like to put forward a proposal relating to staff morale at Care Homes, in particular, staff at Stenson Court Care Home where my brother is cared for. During the consultation process, no staff from management and care staff etc, have left their post. It’s a laudable stance and an indication of how seriously these people take their jobs. I ask the Mayor to recognise the good work undertaken by these staff?”

In response, the Mayor stated that:-

“Thank you Mr. Morgan for your question.

I will always recognise the good work undertaken by all our staff in Care Homes who are working extremely hard. I do recognise this.”

(b) Question from Mrs. C. L. Blackham, to the Mayor of Doncaster, Ros Jones:-

“What is your justification for destroying and dismantling ‘our’ superb quality Care Homes and SEC Centres, taking into account the overwhelming public opposition?”

The Mayor of Doncaster, Ros Jones, gave the following reply:-

“Thank you for your question.

Mrs Blackham has written to me on numerous occasions and will be aware that as a result of the decision by my Cabinet and I, the Council is currently attempting to find alternative providers for the seven existing Council Care Homes. This process is still underway, but we have had expressions of interest from independent sector providers in our initial discussions.

I am therefore hopeful that we will be able to find an alternative provider for the Council’s seven homes, which can continue delivering the high quality care that residents are currently experiencing without them having to move home.

Notwithstanding that, it is also important to remember that the majority of Care Home residents in Doncaster already live in independent sector homes.

The new £4 million Elm Park Care Home in Woodlands shows the kind of facility we want to see available to older people in Doncaster. Facilities will include large en-suite bedrooms, a beauty salon, cinema, cafe, bar and multi-activity room, plus landscaped gardens. It will also create 80 new jobs. In addition, the Council needs to enable people to remain independent and continue to live in their home as long as possible, with support where necessary. Cabinet will be considering a new 'Help to Live at Home in Doncaster' commissioning model next week.

To achieve this requires that the Council considers the current and future needs of the population, with people living longer and a growing ageing population.

The Council is not destroying and dismantling our care services. We are working hard to improve the care services available to people to give them greater choice and control over how they live their lives.

The Council is retaining a number of Social Education Centres and local people will be able to use them if they wish to. In addition, we will also be encouraging and developing alternative activities for residents in local communities.

This is a sensible way of developing adult social care in a way which will improve care for residents, whilst ensuring that it is also fit for the future.”

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13.10, Mrs. Blackham asked the Mayor, the following supplementary question:-

“Thank you, Mayor Ros Jones for your response.

I am still confused and unhappy with the response you have provided. Let's talk about care at home. It is not modernised, it has been around since 1950's. I ask the Mayor to take into account the 27,000 residents of Doncaster. What is the justification for destroying and dismantling the provision of quality care in these homes. Despite what you say, Care Homes are for the care of people in Doncaster?

In response, the Mayor stated that:-

“I believe that we have listened to what people have said regarding keeping their Care Homes open. We provide over 90% of care in the Independent Sector. It's about quality and care for the elderly.”

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

“On a grey grim Saturday September 13th, the good to soft straight mile turf of Doncaster Racecourse witnessed the fall of a 7 year old gelding that had made a substantial profit (£1.3 million) for its owner. Only 1 mile into the race, the horse pulled up with injury.

The horse had only just passed the 3 furlong marker before an ambulance trailer was called to the scene. Startled onlookers, including young children, became aware of the decision to bolt the horse from the crack of a gun. Black screens shielded the events, but the trauma on this stretch of the straight mile was evident. Can the Council identify a problem with the Racecourse and could further falls diminish the enthusiasm of the public for this sport of kings?”

The Mayor of Doncaster, Ros Jones, gave the following reply:-

“I would like to thank Mr. McCready for his question today.

I do appreciate Mr. McCready’s concern over the sad incident involving Wigmore Hall, although I am afraid that I do not agree with his characterisation of St Leger Day this year as a grey and grim Saturday.

The St Leger Festival this year was a superb event, which once again showed off our Borough at its finest. Almost 62,000 people passed through the turnstiles at the Racecourse, a new record attendance. In addition, around 200 separate events took place across the Town during the festival, from the near sell-out version of Kes at Cast, to the British Jet Ski Championships at Lakeside. It is another good example of Doncaster showing that it is a great place to live, visit and do business.

Horseracing contributes tens of millions of pounds to the Doncaster economy through the racecourse, Doncaster Bloodstock Sales and the Northern Racing College. It provides jobs for local people. Racing visitors who come to the Town spend their money in our hotels, restaurants, shops and at local attractions.

As in many sports, there is unfortunately a risk of injury in horseracing. It is always very sad when a racehorse gets injured. However, I also know that animal welfare and the care of horses involved in racing is taken extremely seriously by the horseracing industry. They do a great deal of work to minimise the risks involved and provide high quality care for both horses and jockeys.

Wigmore Hall was a superb racehorse loved by many, not least those who owned and cared for him. However, injuries such as this are relatively rare and this has been the only fatality at Doncaster’s flat racing course from 1,563 runners this year. Over the last 15 years, the equine fatality rate in British Racing has fallen by one-third, from 0.3% to 0.2% of runners.

The RSPCA's equine consultant has supported the way that the on-course vet and the Racecourse dealt with the issue in the most quick and humane manner possible. When an incident such as this occurs, it is important that the appropriate course of action is taken in the best interests of the animal.

Generally, I believe that the public do understand that this situation can occur during horseracing. However, the record attendances at Doncaster this year, including during the Lincoln Festival in March, show that horseracing is thriving in Doncaster.

Nonetheless, I have brought your concerns to the attention of Doncaster Racecourse."

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

"Thank you, Mayor for your response to my question.

I was at the two furlong marker on the day to witness having seen this. Maybe the horse shouldn't have run. It made its debut in 2004. Maybe because of its age and time it should not have run?"

In response, the Mayor stated that:-

"I would like to emphasis again that horse racing is vital to this Borough's economy, but no one wants to see our animals in pain."

(d) Question from Ms. L. M. Hubbard, to the Mayor of Doncaster, Ros Jones:-

"The serious economists know that investment is the key. No need to speak of cuts to pay off 'deficits' when the debt was more than this after WW2 and Government invested in transport, housing and the Health Service! That raised exports and standards of living, and got the country out of recession. Why not now.

How are you going to make the household rates and services more fair for all the people of this community. So far the burdens have fallen hardest on the elderly, most vulnerable and jobless. Are you (and also Ed Milliband?) putting enough pressure on Westminster to lift this austerity policy, which favours the Banks and big business?"

The Mayor of Doncaster, Ros Jones, gave the following reply:-

"Thank you for your question.

I certainly understand Ms. Hubbard's view. I believe that economic growth which the whole country can benefit from is the best way to increase the wellbeing of our residents and pay for the public services that we all want to see. There is certainly a danger that excessive austerity can stifle economic growth rather than encourage it.

Similarly, vast budget cuts to public services such as those provided by Local Councils cannot be implemented without having a real impact on the people that most use those public services. This Conservative-led Government has imposed massive and disproportionate cuts on Doncaster, reducing our government grant by an estimated 58% between 2010 and 2017. At the same time, our costs and the demand for our services are increasing. The result is a massive gap in the budget that simply cannot be bridged by making efficiencies to existing services.

What's worse is that we are not all in it together. David Cameron said that those with the broadest shoulders would bear the greatest burden, but he broke his promise. There are actually some Conservative-led Councils in the South of England that will see an increase in their spending power.

The result of this policy is clear. People in deprived areas that rely on public service provision are most likely to be the people affected by these draconian and unfair cuts.

I have written to the Prime Minister to express my significant concerns at the scale of the cuts and this Council is doing what it can to minimise the impact where possible. A Labour Government will end the bias against our poorest areas by ensuring that the funding we have is distributed more fairly.

My Big Power Switch initiative has been very successful and helped people across the Borough save over £80,000. One household saved a massive £500 off their annual gas and electricity bill. Vivality, it was made accessible to everyone without the need for filling out online forms.

We will also be introducing a living wage in the Council and we are working to develop contracts which encourage employers to pay decent wages and offer good terms of employment. We have brought in new rules to help Doncaster businesses win Council contracts and we are driving forward infrastructure investment in the Borough through the Sheffield City Region. It is Labour in Doncaster that has secured a new Enterprise Zone at the Airport and £56 million investment in 4 major new projects to bring growth to Doncaster. These initiatives will bring thousands of jobs to the Borough. The Enterprise Zone alone has the capacity to accommodate 2000 new engineering and manufacturing jobs.

I am very hopeful that our bid for the National High Speed Rail College will be successful. If it is, it will bring another route to highly skilled employment for many of our young people. New services, such as our community equipment contract, will deliver an improved service for elderly residents.

We must work within the finances available to us, but whilst Labour is in control of this Authority, we will fight to support local residents and encourage the Government to put right its unfair and disproportionate budget cuts.”

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13.10, Ms. Hubbard asked the Mayor, the following supplementary question:-

“Firstly, I would like to thank Councillor Johnson for getting the Rail contract.

Unfortunately, because of the low wages in Doncaster, we have seen people have to take on two jobs. This is not good. So when will the living wage be in position?”

In response, the Mayor stated that:-

“The living wage will be in position in this financial year.”

43. DECISION ON THE PROGRESS OF THE SITES AND POLICIES DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT (Planning Committee Minute No. 81 - 5th February, 2013 and Minute No. 27 - 16th September, 2014, and Council Minute No. 114 - 7th March, 2013 and Minute No. 26 - 25th July, 2013)

Further to the above Minutes, the Council considered a report which sought approval to the withdrawal of the Sites and Policies Development Plan Document and agree that a new Local Plan be prepared and considered by Council prior to submission to Government, and that the Local Development Scheme be updated to take account of this.

It was reported that the Council’s Sites and Policies Development Plan Document (S&P DPD) was submitted to Government for examination in December 2013, following approval by Council in March 2013. Stage 1 of the examination in public hearings had taken place between 29th April and 2nd May, 2014. Members were informed that in his letter, the Inspector had found many parts of the plan to be sound. However, he concluded that amendments were necessary to the plan and its supporting evidence, and the previously adopted Core Strategy, to entirely comply with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and its interpretation both by the Inspector and through the Courts.

It was noted that a Court judgement in respect of Solihull Borough Council made during the examination, had implications for Doncaster and many other Councils across the Country. It established the principle that plans needed to be supported by a new NPPF-compliant ‘Objectively Assessed Housing Need figure’. The Inspector concluded therefore, that the DPD could not proceed on the basis of the figure used in the Council's adopted Core Strategy and that the Core Strategy also needed to be amended in terms of its housing target. As many plans across the country had been affected by the judgement and having considered other available options, it was proposed that the way forward was to withdraw the S&P DPD and prepare a new Local Plan which would replace it and the Local Development Framework Core Strategy.

Members were further informed that the conclusions in the Inspector's letter had been carefully considered. Some concerns had been raised particularly in relation to the weight the Inspector attached to flood risk compared to wider sustainability factors such as regeneration and his conclusion that the Core Strategy should be reviewed so recently after its adoption in May 2012. Advice had been sought from Queen's Counsel, the Planning Inspectorate and the Planning Advisory Service, and representations had been made to the Planning Minister regarding inconsistencies between Inspectors at examinations across the Country and about the interpretation of national policy on flood risk. In view of this, the Council had asked the Inspector to reconsider his conclusions to review the Core Strategy housing requirement and therefore, any need to withdraw the S&P DPD, but the Inspector had declined and considered his concerns could not be accommodated within the current Hearings timescale.

Members noted that in the interim before a Local Plan was adopted, planning applications would be determined in accordance with the existing development plan, the Core Strategy, Waste Core Strategy, saved policies of the UDP including the proposals map, any adopted Neighbourhood plans, the NPPF and any other material considerations.

Following the presentation of the report, Councillor Bob Johnson responded to questions from Members, regarding the costs associated with re-producing a new Local Plan and informed Members that development within the Borough would continue based on provision contained within the existing Plan.

Councillor Paul Bissett made reference to the proposed Waste Transfer Station which had been located in Kirk Sandall and stated that its location would impact on the village and the surrounding area. Councillor Bissett enquired what were the financial implications with regard to the transportation of waste to the site and to the new facility in Manvers. He believed that the only reason why the Waste Transfer Station had been located on this site, was because the land was in the ownership of the Council.

In response, Councillor Bob Johnson stated that he could not comment on the point raised by Councillor Bissett regarding the location of the waste Transfer Station as this was a Planning issue, but confirmed that the financial implications associated with the Station, had been considered by Cabinet and Full Council. However, he assured Councillor Bissett that a written response would be provided in relation to the proposed costs.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the Sites and Policies Development Plan Document be withdrawn and that Officers write to the Planning Inspectorate, to confirm this; and
- (2) a new Local Plan be prepared and considered by Council prior to its submission to Government and the Local Development Scheme be updated to take account of this.

44. A YEAR OF IMPROVEMENT - MAKING A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE TO THE QUALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES IN DONCASTER

The Council received a report which outlined the work undertaken to improve Children's Services during the past year and described the current position prior to the Doncaster Children's Services Trust becoming operational on 1st October, 2014. A copy of the Commissioner's report to the Secretary of State on the establishment of the Trust and service improvement, was appended to the report for Members' information.

The Director of Children's Services, Eleanor Brazil, provided an overview of progress made since July, 2013, and highlighted the salient points from the report, including key areas of focus, i.e. the improvement in developing frontline services, performance management and quality assurance systems, case management; improving outcomes, Special Education Need and Disability, Improvements in child sexual exploitation and the areas for further improvement.

Members were informed that the contract for the Children's Trust had been approved by Cabinet and the Trust would be operational from 1st October, 2014. Furthermore, the Children's Commissioner appointed by the Secretary of State, had commented favourably on the progress to date.

The Director of Children's Services concluded that whilst the journey of improvement had accelerated noticeably, there was much more work needed to be done by the Trust to ensure that children's social care improved in order to provide high quality support for the children of the Borough.

Councillor Nuala Fennelly, Cabinet Lead Member for Children's Services, endorsed the comments made by the Director of Children's Services. She highlighted the initiatives and actions taken by the Council to get to where they were now, notably the appointment of a new Strategic Improvement Partner, together with the appointment of Eleanor Brazil, as new the Director of Children's Services. In addition, reference was made to working with the Department for Education (DfE) to put in place the governance model for taking forward Children's Services within the Borough. Councillor Fennelly advised Council that she held regular meetings with the leadership of Children's Services and the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board. As a consequence of the initiatives and actions taken to date, there had been improvements in performance indicators, recruitment of permanent staff, fewer complaints, improved budget position at year end, improved staff morale and positive feedback from the DfE, the Children's Commissioner and many partners across Doncaster. Councillor Fennelly reiterated the importance of maintaining the progress made to date and working with the Trust and key partners, to improve Children's Services across the Borough.

Members welcomed the report and acknowledged the good work being undertaken by stakeholders and front line staff during the past year. However, Members sought clarification on a number of points within the report, during which the Director of Children's Services responded to concerns raised in particular, the number of agency staff which still remained high and the high level of repeat referrals within a year.

Following further questions from Members seeking assurances that the recent sexual child exploitation cases in Rotherham would not happen in Doncaster and whether children in Doncaster were safe, the Director of Children's Services commented that child sexual exploitation occurred in every Town and City, and her report made that clear no one could provide a cast iron guarantee that children would not be harmed, but the Council now had better systems in place to identify at an early stage, concerns regarding the safety of children.

Further to a request from Councillor R. Allan Jones, Members agreed that the recommendation in the report include that the Council endorsed the action taken by Cabinet on 17th September, to agree the transfer of functions to the Children's Trust and those that remained with the Council.

RESOLVED

- (1) that the contents of the report and that of the Commissioner for Children's Services, be noted; and
- (2) the decision taken by Cabinet on 17th September, 2014, to the transfer of functions to the Children's Trust and those that remained with the Council, be endorsed.

45. NOMINATION OF A REPRESENTATIVE TO THE SHEFFIELD CITY REGION COMBINED AUTHORITY'S AUDIT COMMITTEE (Minute No. 115 – 7th March, 2013)

Further to the above Minute, the Council considered a report which sought a representative of the Council, to serve on the Sheffield City Region Combined Authority's (SCRCA) Audit Committee.

It was reported that at the meeting of Full 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 in relation to the SCRCA, its Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Transport Committee, the Council had now been requested to nominate one representative to sit on the SCRCA's Audit Committee. The SCRCA was seeking to appoint member representatives to its Audit Committee on the basis that each member authority on the SCRCA had been asked to nominate one Elected Member, preferably the Chair of its own Audit Committee, to form a core membership.

In conclusion, the report proposed that the holder of the position of Chair of the Audit Committee, be nominated as the Council's representative on the SCRCA Audit Committee.

Following Members being afforded the opportunity to comment on the report, it was Moved by Councillor Jonathan Wood and Seconded by Councillor Yvonne Woodcock that Councillor James Hart be appointed as the Council's representative to serve on the SCRCA Audit Committee.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 21.6, the two nominations were put to the meeting in alphabetical order of surname, the results of the votes being as follows:-

For: Councillor James Hart – 9

For: Councillor Austen White (Chair of the Audit Committee) – 35

On being put to the meeting, the Motion to appoint the Chair of the Audit Committee, Councillor Austen White, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED that the holder of the position of Chair of the Audit Committee, be nominated as the Council's representative on the Sheffield City Region Combined Authority's Audit Committee.

46. INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL APPOINTMENTS

The Council considered a report which sought authority for the appointment of 3 new members to the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel.

It was reported that the Council had a duty to have an Independent Remuneration Panel comprising a minimum of 3 members. The purpose of the Panel was to make recommendations as to the levels of allowances and expenses for Members and Co-optees of Doncaster Council. The Panel also acted as the Parish Remuneration Panel for all Parish and Town Councils within the Borough.

Members noted that following the resignation of Mr Ray Maslam, the Panel now had only 2 members; Mr Keith Marriott and Mr Ranjan Talukder. Applications had been received from Edward Laud, Derek Morris and Rosemary Young, who all currently assisted the Council in determining School Education Appeals and possessed the skills and attributes required to join the Independent Remuneration Panel.

In conclusion, the report proposed that Edward Laud, Derek Morris and Rosemary Young, be appointed as members of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

RESOLVED that

- (1) Edward Laud, Derek Morris and Rosemary Young, be appointed as members of the Independent Remuneration Panel;
- (2) the continuation of Mr Keith Marriott and Mr Ranjan Talukder as Independent Remuneration Panel members, be noted; and
- (3) £150 be paid to the Chair of the Remuneration Panel for drafting and presenting the Remuneration Panel report and recommendations to Council on the level of allowances.

47. APPOINTMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT MEMBER TO THE AUDIT COMMITTEE (Minute No. 16(1) – 13th June, 2014)

Further to the above Minute, the Council considered a report which was presented by the Chair of the Audit Committee, Councillor Austen White, which sought authority for the appointment of an independent member to serve on the Audit Committee.

It was reported that at the Annual Meeting of Council on 13th June, 2014, Council agreed to appoint one co-opted, non-voting, independent member to sit on the Audit Committee. An advertisement had been placed on the Council's website inviting applications from the public, which resulted in 3 applications being received.

Members were informed that interviews had been held on 23rd September by a Panel comprising, the Chair of the Audit Committee, Councillor Austen White, Vice-Chair of the Audit Committee, Councillor R. Allan Jones, the Director of Finance and Corporate Services, Simon Wiles and the Head of Internal Audit, Colin Earl.

The Chair of the Audit Committee informed the Chamber that the Panel was recommending that Kathryn Smart, who was CIPFA qualified and had extensive experience in finance, audit, assurance, risk management and governance, be appointed as the independent member to the Audit Committee.

RESOLVED that Kathryn Smart be appointed as independent member to the Audit Committee.

48. TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING MOTION, WRITTEN NOTICE OF WHICH HAS BEEN GIVEN BY THE MAYOR OF DONCASTER, ROS JONES AND SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR PAUL BISSETT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 16.1

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 16.1, a Motion was submitted by the Mayor of Doncaster, Ros Jones and Seconded by Councillor Paul Bissett:-

“That this Council:-

- a) Notes the truly harrowing extent and nature of child sexual exploitation in Rotherham described in the report by Professor Alexis Jay OBE, expresses its deepest sorrow to all those who have suffered, and hopes that all of those responsible for these heinous crimes are met with the full force of the law;
- b) Believes that all of those who are known to have failed children, including people elected to public office, must take responsibility for failures of this scale;
- c) Welcomes the belated decision by the Police and Crime Commissioner Shaun Wright to resign from his position as it is important that local people are able to retain confidence in both the office of Police and Crime Commissioner and the individual who holds that office;
- d) Notes the current inability of any agency or public group to remove the post holder from office and calls on the Government to rectify this unacceptable position and, indeed, looks to the future sustainability and need for all Police and Crime Commissioners;
- e) Requests that the independently chaired Doncaster Safeguarding Children's Board undertakes an assessment of the recommendations contained in Professor Jay's report and benchmarks practice in Doncaster against all of the recommendations contained in the report, identifying any additional improvements that should be made by all agencies involved in keeping children safe; and
- f) Confirms that this assessment will be reported within approximately two months to the Cabinet, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and the independently chaired Doncaster Safeguarding Children's Board."

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

An amendment to the Motion was **MOVED** by Councillor Jonathan Wood and **SECONDED** by Councillor James Hart, in that paragraph (d) of the Motion, be amended to read as follows:-

- "d) Notes the current inability of any agency or public group to remove the post holder from office and calls on the Government to rectify this unacceptable position;"

A vote was taken on the amendment proposed by Councillor Jonathan Wood which was declared as follows:-

For – 7

Against – 37

Abstain – 0

On being put to the meeting, the amendment to the Motion proposed by Councillor Jonathan Wood was declared LOST.

A vote was taken on the proposed Motion by the Mayor of Doncaster, Ros Jones, which was declared as follows:-

For – 39

Against – 3

Abstentions – 2

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

RESOLVED that this Council:-

- a) Notes the truly harrowing extent and nature of child sexual exploitation in Rotherham described in the report by Professor Alexis Jay OBE, expresses its deepest sorrow to all those who have suffered, and hopes that all of those responsible for these heinous crimes are met with the full force of the law;
- b) Believes that all of those who are known to have failed children, including people elected to public office, must take responsibility for failures of this scale;
- c) Welcomes the belated decision by the Police and Crime Commissioner Shaun Wright to resign from his position as it is important that local people are able to retain confidence in both the office of Police and Crime Commissioner and the individual who holds that office;
- d) Notes the current inability of any agency or public group to remove the post holder from office and calls on the Government to rectify this unacceptable position and, indeed, looks to the future sustainability and need for all Police and Crime Commissioners;
- e) Requests that the independently chaired Doncaster Safeguarding Children's Board undertakes an assessment of the recommendations contained in Professor Jay's report and benchmarks practice in Doncaster against all of the recommendations contained in the report, identifying any additional improvements that should be made by all agencies involved in keeping children safe; and

- f) Confirms that this assessment will be reported within approximately two months to the Cabinet, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and the independently chaired Doncaster Safeguarding Children's Board.

49. 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

Q. Councillor Cynthia Ransome asked the Mayor of Doncaster:-

"My question is to Mayor Jones in the absence of Councillor Pat Knight and relates to the sudden closing of Clifton Court which is a private run home for the elderly. Little notice was given to the residents and relatives before they were bungled out of their home without ceremony. This was accomplished by an army of Social Workers. This was their home. This was their last home. The operation of the move was construed by the relatives as bullying and threatening. This contrasts to the promises made to the Caregate Group to the sensitivity used to re-home the elderly. Clifton Court residents were not allowed that dignity and neither were their loved ones. My question is this, why did this happen, why were Sprotbrough Ward Councillors not informed of the closure?"

A. The Mayor of Doncaster gave the following response:-

"Clifton Court Care Home was closed by the CQC and our Officers went along to assist. We had many of the residents supported by the Authority. We as an Authority did raise concerns with the CQC who subsequently came in and saw that things were not right and they closed the home. It is not up to me to notify Ward Councillors. It is up to the CQC or our own Council Officers to do this. It's up to me to ensure that these people are looked after properly and that residents get the best quality care."

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15.7, Councillor Cynthia Ransome asked the Mayor of Doncaster, the following supplementary question:-

“I find this absolutely incredible. I would like to point out that when the opposition have spoken in the Chamber today, there has been much ‘twittering’ going on. These people were moved within 8 days. They were bundled out of their home. They were threatened and had to find somewhere because the Care Home was being boarded up. I was told that this was an Executive decision and that Officers were not to inform Members?”

A. The Mayor of Doncaster gave the following response:-

“We need to ensure that we get the best quality of care for residents. The residents were not bundled out of their home. I made no recommendation not to inform Councillors.”

Q. Councillor Jonathan Wood asked the Mayor of Doncaster:-

“In relation to my on-going question, what is going on about webcasting Council meetings and making sure that people in the Chamber are to be held to account to what they say. I know that you said Mayor that it is about costs, but this would cost very little to do. Other Local Authorities in South Yorkshire including the Police and Fire Authorities, are web-casting their meetings. When are you going to see Doncaster opening up?”

A. The Mayor of Doncaster gave the following response:-

“This is about openness and honesty. We always ask about the costs to do this. I understand that the equipment in the Council Chamber is not compatible and adequate in terms of web-casting. As you are aware, any decisions relating to determination of our financial resources are considered by Full Council.”

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

“I would like you to provide me with a date. It is Government guidance. Don’t just put us off.”

A. The Mayor of Doncaster gave the following response:-

“There is no statutory requirement at present. The decision will come to this Chamber to determine what the Council wishes to do with our valuable resources along with other competing demands.”

Q. Councillor R. Allan Jones asked the Mayor of Doncaster:-

“Regarding the proposed Council strikes, could the Mayor confirm that staff can attend work without being harassed or intimidated by over-zealous Union Members or Union Officials. What undertaking will the Mayor give to residents that services delivered by the Council will continue unhindered?”

A. The Mayor of Doncaster gave the following response:-

“We will always look to deliver all services. No one will be bullied or intimidated. Staff will make their own decision.”

Q. Councillor Paul Bissett asked the Mayor of Doncaster:-

“We heard that there has been another round of recommendations from the Boundary Commission that they are moving Barnby Dun into the Stainforth Ward. Regarding lack of consultation and the short notice, will further consultation be undertaken?”

A. The Mayor of Doncaster gave the following response:-

“It is up to the Boundary Commission if they want to go out to seek consultation. I am happy to establish a cross-party working group to look at this. It is a cross-party view and it is up to you if you want to put an application forward in order to make any recommendations.”

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15.7, Councillor Paul Bissett asked the Mayor of Doncaster, the following supplementary question:-

“Rather than changing the boundaries, would this Council support one Councillor in every Ward?”

A. The Mayor of Doncaster gave the following response:-

“I put forward 54 Councillors and that’s what I stuck to.”

Q. Councillor Alan Smith asked the Mayor of Doncaster:-

“In your Mayoral Manifesto, you talk about bringing down the cost of living. The cost of reducing living is one of the Councils key objectives. How can the Council influence the costs of goods and services. Could you mention 3 areas in which you propose to bring this about?”

A. The Mayor of Doncaster gave the following response:-

“The ‘Big Switch’
I have frozen the cost of pendant alarms.

I have gone out there to encourage businesses to move forward and have got the energy tariff reduced to help medium size businesses.”

Q. Councillor Alan Smith asked the Mayor of Doncaster:-

“I commend you for the ‘Big Switch’. In terms of the smoke alarms, this only benefits a few people. Regarding supplementing small companies, I believe you are moving in the right direction, but there are thousands of people in the Borough therefore, how are you going to put money in their pockets?”

A. The Mayor of Doncaster gave the following response:-

“It’s not smoke alarms. It’s pendant alarms. In terms of the pendant alarms they are life changing.”

Q. Councillor Fred Gee asked the Mayor of Doncaster:-

“Extra revenue will be appreciated by the people of Doncaster. With 200 delegates attending the UKIP Conference, would the Mayor endorse this?”

A. The Mayor of Doncaster gave the following response:-

“The Conference facilities are let by many different organisations. It’s about boosting the economy by the people coming to the Town, but I am not endorsing the conference.”

Q. Councillor Phil Cole asked the Mayor of Doncaster:-

“World class Conference facilities are on offer in the Borough. In relation to the Boundary Commission, I believe that they have shown tremendous flexibility and have taken on the views of residents and Parish and Town Councils. Councillor R. Allan Jones contributed to the cross-party views. Would the Mayor not agree with me that two Member Wards were rejected?”

A. The Mayor of Doncaster gave the following response:-

“When we look into all Boundary Commission changes, they have taken on many of the views of Elected Members and members of the public.”

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

No questions were put to the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Glyn Jones, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Equalities and Cohesion.

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

In the absence of Councillor Joe Blackham, Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Neighbourhoods, the Chair of Council informed Members that any questions for Councillor Blackham should be submitted in writing to the Executive Office after this meeting and that the Cabinet Member would respond accordingly.

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

In the absence of Councillor Tony Corden, Cabinet Member, Support to Lead Member for Children's Services with a focus on Safeguarding, the Chair of Council informed Members that any questions for Councillor Corden should be submitted in writing to the Executive Office after this meeting and that the Cabinet Member would respond accordingly.

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

No questions were put to Councillor Nuala Fennelly, Cabinet Lead Member for Children's Services.

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

Q. Councillor James Hart asked Councillor Bob Johnson:-

"Can you give assurances that as the transition of funding for skills moves to the control and re-direction of the Local Enterprise Partnership, that Doncaster is not left behind in the allocation of funds, so provides for vocational training in Doncaster and have access to a fair share of the funds available to grow the skills of the residents of Doncaster?"

A. Councillor Bob Johnson gave the following response:-

"Yes, I can. If we don't get our fair share, I will be relying on our Chief Executive who is the lead Chief Executive for skills in Sheffield City Region. I can assure you that we will get our fair share."

Q. Councillor Jonathan Wood asked Councillor Bob Johnson:-

"Councillor Johnson, earlier you gave a good endorsement. Regarding new investment to the Borough, can you confirm if Doncaster operates in a gold fish bowl or do you attribute some of this to the success of national policies over the last four years?"

A. Councillor Bob Johnson gave the following response:-

“We definitely do not operate in a gold fish bowl. We work in partnership with the Local Enterprise Partnership, Sheffield City Region and others, which helps us to move on. We are moving faster than any other region. But we have to keep this up.”

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

In the absence of Councillor Pat Knight, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care, the Chair of Council informed Members that any questions for Councillor Knight should be submitted in writing to the Executive Office after this meeting and that the Cabinet Member would respond accordingly.

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

Q. Councillor Fred Gee asked Councillor Christine Mills:-

“Has the bulldozer moved on to the Waste Transfer Station before the licence has been agreed?”

A. Councillor Christine Mills gave the following response:-

“As we know, the Waste Transfer Station is a key element of waste collection. The Waste Strategy was considered by Overview and Scrutiny, Cabinet and Council. As the question you raise requires a detailed response, I will provide you with a written reply.”

Q. Councillor Paul Bissett asked Councillor Christine Mills:-

“In relation to the Waste Transfer Station at Kirk Sandall, can you tell me if there has been a loss of revenue to the Council with regard to the site at Hungerhill, as this is prime building land. I understand that this site was initially valued at £40m. Who would want to live near a Waste Transfer Station?”

A. Councillor Christine Mills gave the following response:-

“Thank you for your question Councillor Bissett, I will ask Officers to provide you with a written response.”

Q. Councillor Cynthia Ransome asked Councillor Christine Mills:-

“My question relates to litter and fly tipping which is on the increase. Litter in rural Wards is a disgrace and I have not seen any prosecutions in the newspapers. Can I ask why?”

A. Councillor Christine Mills gave the following response:-

“Enforcement sits within Councillor Blackham’s Portfolio area, but as I am aware of this and I do receive the briefings in relation to prosecutions, I will respond in Councillor Blackham’s absence. Therefore, on behalf of my colleague, I will ensure that this information is sent to you in the form of a written response.”

Q. Councillor Jonathan Wood asked Councillor Christine Mills:

“I am extremely concerned about the Landlord Accreditation Scheme. I understand the Council is implementing a legal process. You need to be very careful not to do this as a profit centre, but it appears that this is where we are going with this. Are you absolutely sure that you want to do this in terms of the environment and the imposing of a £500 tax on tenants?”

A. Councillor Christine Mills gave the following response:-

“The consultation process on this has just come to a close, but the Council has met with the landlords on two separate occasions. This is an on-going process. We need to get all the information together and consider all relevant factors, and issues before a decision can be made.”

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

Q. “You have not answered my question. Are you going to go ahead with this. We have got plenty of legislation in place and we are not using it; we should be using it. We have a hit squad in place. Will you make a u-turn and make the right decision?”

A. Councillor Christine Mills gave the following response:-

“There has been no decision made at this time. It’s about bringing all the information together and seeing what’s the best course of action for Doncaster. I would like to reiterate that no decision has been made.”

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

In the absence of Councillor Bill Mordue, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation, the Chair of Council informed Members that any questions for Councillor Mordue should be submitted in writing to the Executive Office after this meeting and that the Cabinet Member would respond accordingly.

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

Q. Councillor Cynthia Ransome asked Councillor John Mounsey:-

“Councillor Mounsey, would you not agree that OSMC is like a Chameleon, except it does not change its colour, but it changes the rules. OSMC is another Executive. A challenging OSMC. Now an enabling OSMC making policy. Finally, now the most important change; to adjust the rules, so no opposition has a right to challenge the decision OSMC has helped to make. Not even with a Petition of 27,600 signatures. This is Doncaster Democracy at its best?”

A. Councillor John Mounsey gave the following response:-

“No.”

Q. Councillor Jonathan Wood asked Councillor John Mounsey:-

“It’s nice to see Cllr. Mounsey back and that he has had a good break. Whilst you were away, there was an important decision taken regarding the closure of Care Homes. In light of you not being here, what is your view today. Would you uphold the decision that was taken?”

A. Councillor John Mounsey gave the following response:-

“I am allowed a holiday. I believe that the decision was a right and proper one.”

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

“A decision was taken on the day to exclude expert witnesses. Do you believe that people should be choked off from giving testimony. Can you tell me what happened to their views. What are your views regarding openness?”

A. Councillor John Mounsey gave the following response:-

“I am the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny and I am always open and honest. I understand that the Chair on that day when I was away, was Councillor Hilary McNamee who made a decision based on the evidence given to her on the day. When a decision has been called-in, we must stick to the procedure. The decision taken at the meeting was the correct one.”

50. 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 30th July, 2014.
- B. South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority held on 28th July, 2014 and Section 41 Briefing Notes for August and September, 2014.
- C. Sheffield City Region Combined Authority held on 14th July and 26th August, 2014.
- D. South Yorkshire Pensions Authority held on 8th and 24th July, 2014.

CHAIR: _____

DATE: _____