

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING

15TH JANUARY, 2015

A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL was held at the CIVIC OFFICE, WATERDALE, DONCASTER, on THURSDAY, 15TH JANUARY, 2015, at 2.00 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, Joe Blackham, Susan Bolton, Elsie Butler, Paul Coddington, Phil Cole, John Cooke, Richard Cooper-Holmes, Tony Corden, Linda Curran, Monty Cuthbert, Nuala Fennelly, Fred Gee, Neil Gethin, James Hart, Rachel Hodson, Charlie Hogarth, Sandra Holland, Mark Houlbrook, Barbara Hoyle, Frank Jackson, Mick Jameson, Alan Jones, Ken Keegan, Jane Kidd, Ted Kitchen, Sue Knowles, Tracey Leyland-Jepson, Chris McGuinness, Sue McGuinness, Christine Mills, John Mounsey, Jane Nightingale, Susan Phillips, Andy Pickering, Cynthia Ransome, Tony Revill, Kevin Rodgers, Craig Sahman, Patricia Schofield, Dave Shaw, Alan Smith, Austen White, Sue Wilkinson, Jonathan Wood and Yvonne Woodcock.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Andrew Bosmans, Bob Ford, Barbara Hedley, Eva Hughes, Deborah Hutchinson, Bob Johnson, R. Allan Jones, Pat Knight, John McHale, Hilary McNamee and Bill Mordue.

69. RECENT DEATH OF FORMER COUNCILLOR, MRS. JUNE HAWLEY, J.P.

Elected Members, Officers and members of the public, stood in silence as a mark of respect and remembrance in relation to the recent death of Mrs. June Hawley, J.P., a former Chair of the Education Committee, Vice-Chair of the Planning and Design Services Committee and Richmond Ward Councillor, who passed away on 21st December, aged 71. Members were informed that a service and committal would take place at the Rose Hill Crematorium on Friday, 16th January, at 1.20 p.m.

70. ADVICE FROM THE MONITORING OFFICER REGARDING THE PROCEDURE TO RAISE A POINT OF ORDER

Prior to the commencement of formal business, Roger Harvey, Monitoring Officer, addressed the Chamber and reminded Elected Members of the procedure set out within the Council's Constitution, regarding the circumstances when an Elected Member could raise a Point of Order. The Monitoring Officer emphasised that a Point of Order may only relate to an

alleged breach of Council Procedure Rules or the Law and should not be used as a means of interrupting or delaying debate.

71. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests made at the meeting.

72. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 27TH NOVEMBER, 2014

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 27th November, 2014, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

73. 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 announcement:-

“Members, for those of you who are not aware, I am sad to inform you that Councillor Barbara Hedley’s husband, Arthur, passed away last Friday evening on 9th January. I am sure you will all join me in offering Councillor Hedley and her family, our sincere sympathy and good wishes at this sad time.

I have no further announcements.”

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

“I am delighted to announce Doncaster Council has been shortlisted for the prestigious national award for ‘Most Improved Council’.

This is fantastic news for our Town and the shortlisting in itself, is a great tribute to the progress we have made in the last two years under a Labour administration.

People in Doncaster have a right to expect good local governance and well-run public services.

As recently as 2010, when Peter Davies was Mayor, Doncaster was labelled the worst Council in Britain and the Council was in Government intervention.

We have already come out of intervention almost a year early, with the Secretary of State praising the progress we have made.

I’d like to thank all of the staff, Councillors, partners and particularly the local residents, who have made this happen.

This independent recognition can give people in Doncaster more confidence in the way the Council is run and the services it provides.

There is still more to do and we will face difficult challenges, particularly given the Government's unfair and draconian cuts to public services across South Yorkshire.

The job is not done. We have got the Council back on track, but this is only the start of our journey. Our challenge is to transform public services and make the maximum impact that we can with the resources that are available to us. I want people in Doncaster to be proud of their Borough and the Local Council. This shows that we have moved in the right direction. People are clearly sitting up and taking notice of the improvements that have taken place in Doncaster.

Well done and thank you to all involved in bringing about this transformation.”

There were no announcements from Deputy Mayor, Councillor Glyn Jones.

Councillor Joe Blackham, Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Neighbourhoods, made the following announcement:-

“Doncaster Council has been shortlisted in 3 categories of the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Awards which includes the ‘Most Improved Council’ and for the best ‘Campaign of the Year Award’, ‘the Big Power Switch’, where residents have saved in excess of £150,000. The outcome of which will be determined at a later date.”

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

“It has already been referred to that the Council has been shortlisted for the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Awards 2015 and further to this, the Integrated Hospital Discharge Team, have been put forward in a third category, as ‘Team of the Year’ Award. RDaSH (Rotherham, Doncaster and South Humber) Foundation Trust and the Council have worked on improving the assessment system which very much helps the flow of patients and reduces bed blocking.”

There were no announcements from any other Cabinet Members.

74. 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 Residential Homes could now be moving to the private sector. The Labour Party is committed to austerity up to 31/03/16. Closure of Social Education Centres affects everybody from babies to pensioners. To keep them open until 2016, why can't monies be found (for example) from uncommitted reserves, currently around £17m? Will the Doncaster Mayor now reconsider the closure of the three SEC's prior to the Caregate sponsored Judicial Review on 16th January, 2015?”

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

“Thank you for your question Mr Wright.

I should first clarify that our Social Education Centres provide support for adults, but not babies or children.

I am also advised that the Council has also recently received confirmation that the legal challenge against the Day Centre closure decision has been withdrawn by the claimants.

In terms of Social Education Centres, the reasons behind our proposals have been widely discussed.

We want to improve our services and a significant number of people are now choosing to receive a personal budget or direct payment to meet their needs. With support, they are able to access a wider choice of activities within their communities and across the Borough. Our focus is on delivering a good service for our most vulnerable residents.

In terms of the use of uncommitted reserves to pay for services, we have £17m which would only run the Council for 12 days. Reserves are one-off monies and we have to have a sustainable financial strategy to pay for our services on an on-going basis.

For a Council of our size which spends over £500m a year and with savings targets of £109m, this is not an excessive amount of reserves.

We know that we have to cover for emergencies such as the floods in 2007. Changes in legislation can also result in additional financial costs which cannot always be quantified. For example, we are expecting a significant increase in the number of business rate appeals in March due to changes in legislation. In addition, we need to be prepared for wider economic changes such as increases in interest rates.

Events such as these can very easily use up our uncommitted reserves so it is important that we have an appropriate level of reserves in place. Notwithstanding that, it would not be appropriate to use reserves to maintain the existing service as we do not want to preserve the status quo; we want to improve services for our vulnerable people.”

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

"I did state in my question, 'To keep residential Care Homes open until 2016, why can't monies be found (for example), from uncommitted reserves'. The majority of your response has focused on the issue of uncommitted reserves. What we are talking about are vulnerable people. It should not be about the cost. In theory, we should have a new Government in Parliament this year, so if we keep things going and ticking over, things should get better over the next 18 months. My question is, how much does it cost to maintain Social Education Centres each year and what other monies or means from other resources, are there to keep things going during the next 18 months?"

A. In response, the Mayor stated that:-

"The figures you are enquiring about are available in the public domain. I have not got the figures to hand, but I am happy to provide them. The Council has had £109m cuts to its budget. I will provide you with a written response."

(b) Question from Mr. D. Griffith, on behalf of Council Watch, to the Mayor of Doncaster, Ros Jones:-

"Health England warns that hundreds of thousands of elderly people are dying of loneliness in their own homes, the projected cost to the NHS of their progressive debilitation totalling billions of pounds.

A charity helpline has attracted over 300,000 calls in eight months.

Free public transport (which we had until 31st March, 2014) is essential for encouraging elderly people to get out.

You are minuted (SYITA) stating you were prepared to axe the free cross border rail travel to West Yorkshire for the elderly and disabled.

Is that a commendable stance for a Mayor - a Labour Mayor - to take?"

Mr. Griffith was not in attendance at the meeting, however, the Mayor gave the following reply:-

"I'd like to thank Mr. Griffith for his question.

I agree with your statement that it is essential our elderly residents are encouraged and supported to get out and about.

Being able to travel and interact with others is an important way of ensuring that people do not succumb to loneliness and are able to live healthy and fulfilling lives.

That is why my view and the position of Doncaster's representatives on the South Yorkshire Integrated Transport Authority, was to vote against the full train concessions being removed.

That is how Doncaster's representatives voted at the meeting, but as you will be aware, they were outvoted at the time.

I then personally voted at the Combined Authority meeting for the subsidised rail travel to be reinstated.

It is not true to say that I am in favour of axing free cross border rail travel to West Yorkshire. That is not the case.

What I made clear at the meeting was that if any subsidised travel needed to be withdrawn because of the draconian cuts we are facing, then it would be preferable to remove cross border subsidies than those within South Yorkshire.

I make no apology for prioritising travel for older people within Doncaster and South Yorkshire.

It is also worth making clear that a wide range of free travel services are still in place for older people.

All four South Yorkshire Councils have done what they can to support local people in the face of the Con-Dem Government's stark and disproportionate cuts to public services in our area."

75. FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH

The Council considered a report presented by the Chair of Council, Councillor Pat Haith, recommending that the Freedom of the Borough be bestowed on Bobbie Roberts, MBE JP., in recognition of her work as a volunteer at Doncaster Deaf Trust and her role in championing the development of children and young people with additional needs locally, nationally and internationally.

The Chair of Council informed the Chamber that Bobbie Roberts was arguably one of the longest serving volunteers in Doncaster. She had dedicated the last 37 years to supporting the pupils, students and staff at the nursery, school, college and care home that were owned and operated by Doncaster's Deaf Trust. Bobbie Roberts had attended the Deaf Trust campus five days a week and received no remuneration for her efforts. Although the Trust received Government funding linked to the curriculum, any additional resources could only be acquired via fundraising and Bobbie had been key to achieving contributions in order to purchase specialist audiology equipment, a sensory room, outdoor play and gym equipment, an accessible minibus and numerous educational activity visits.

Members noted that Bobbie Roberts had been the Chair of the Board of Trustees at Doncaster Deaf Trust for 21 years and had been instrumental in the decision-making processes of the Trustees and the Governors. She was currently involved in a worldwide initiative called 'Spread the Sign' which aimed to create an international sign language. Bobbie had recently travelled to Estonia and Brazil to participate in the development of the language.

It was also reported that Bobbie had supported serving and ex-serving Armed Forces personnel and the Deaf Trust had hosted receptions for Regiments returning from tours of duty in Afghanistan. She had also supported the British Community of Gurkhas and worked to improve their welfare. In addition, Bobbie was a Trustee at the CAST Theatre and Doncaster Culture and Leisure Trust. The Chair stated that despite Bobbie's advancing years, her drive, enthusiasm and indomitable spirit continued to inspire others and her colleagues had described her efforts as 'invaluable' and 'incomparable'.

RESOLVED that the application to bestow the Freedom of the Borough on Bobbie Roberts, be supported.

76. PROPOSALS FOR LOCALISED COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT FOR 2015/16 (THE LOCAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME)

The Council considered a report presented by the Mayor of Doncaster, Ros Jones, which set out proposals for Localised Council Tax Support for 2015/16, which was formerly known as Council Tax Benefit.

In presenting the report, the Mayor informed Members that the Localised Council Tax Support was a means tested form of help to assist the most vulnerable and those who may not have the means to pay their Council Tax in Doncaster. Doncaster had low Council Tax levels with the majority of properties falling in Band A and Doncaster currently had the fourth lowest Band D Council Tax of the 91 Metropolitan Authorities.

The Mayor reported that the local scheme would help to support over 28,100 of the most vulnerable and those households in Doncaster least able to pay, requiring those who could afford to pay something more of the Council Tax. Of these, over 13,200 were of pension age and more than 14,900 were of working age on a low income. Furthermore, under the national welfare reforms from the 1st April, 2013, Council Tax Benefit had been replaced by Local Council Tax Support and Local Authorities received considerably reduced funding from Government for the scheme. Previously, the full cost of awarding this reduction was funded by the Government.

Members were informed that under the Localism Agenda, billing authorities had to decide for working age claims, who was eligible for a reduction in their Council Tax and what level of support they should receive. Pensioners and other aspects of the local scheme were prescribed by the Government and the Council had no discretion in relation to these matters.

It was further reported that the Council had acknowledged the challenges facing both the Council, due to cuts in Government funding, and those affecting many citizens due to their low income, the cost of living challenge and wider welfare reforms which may be impacting on them. The Council had been able this year to avoid making major changes to the scheme, avoiding reducing support further by introducing an 'across the board' deduction which would impact on the most vulnerable and those who may not have the means to pay.

Other Authorities who had introduced such schemes, were making further 'across the board' deductions to try and make their schemes viable and balance their collection fund.

In conclusion, the Mayor stated that the Council was concerned that the scheme could have come under such severe pressure that the Council may have had to make further significant cuts. However, due to improvements in the local economy, a reduced number of claimants, a well-run scheme and a more buoyant tax base, it had not proved necessary to cut the scheme further for next year.

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

In response to Councillor Paul Bissett's question to the Mayor, Ros Jones, with regard to what was the current level of Council tax arrears, the Mayor stated that the collection rate in the long term was close to 99% and that very little had been written off by the Council. The Mayor agreed to provide Councillor Bissett with a written response in relation to the arrears position.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the protection for pensioners as a result of the annual uprating of allowances, premiums and non-dependant deductions which are prescribed by the Government and the associated change in expenditure which is funded locally, be noted;
- (2) the Authority uprate allowances and premiums for those of working age in line with the annual uprating set by the Government and used in the current scheme, and in other forms of support including Housing Benefit;
- (3) it be noted that any increase in Council Tax liability for the Council, its major preceptors and Local Parish preceptors, will increase the cost of Local Council Tax Support; the assumptions used in the cost of the scheme are an increase of 1.95% of the Council's Tax and that of the major preceptors and Parish preceptors;
- (4) the Equality analysis, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report and Due Regard Statement as part of the decision making, be noted; and
- (5) the revised scheme which, as linked at Appendix 2 to the report and has been amended to take into account the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) (Amendment) (No 2) Regulations 2014, be approved.

77. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROGRESS REPORT

The Council considered a report, introduced by Councillor John Mounsey, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, which updated Members on the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC) and the four standing Overview and Scrutiny Panels for the period June to December, 2014. The report also provided details as to how the recent changes to the Overview and Scrutiny function were being taken forward.

Councillor Mounsey in presenting the report, thanked Elected Members, the Executive, Officers, partners, stakeholders and the public, who had taken time to attend meetings and engage with the Overview and Scrutiny process.

Members were informed that the Overview and Scrutiny function had changed the way it worked this year and the new system was now embedding. OSMC had met more often to ensure it maintained a stronger management and co-ordination role, and its membership now included Panel Chairs with full voting rights. Furthermore, the Overview and Scrutiny Panels were undertaking more detailed task and finish work on a small number of important issues and the Health and Adult Social Care Panel was continuing to undertake the Council's statutory health scrutiny role. Some of the reviews undertaken by the Panels had already been completed and the remainder would be completed before the end of the year.

Councillor Mounsey outlined the major issues that OSMC needed to focus on including, performance monitoring and review work to ensure a greater impact on future policy development, and improvement of services. In addition, attendance at formal meetings, the Overview and Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs would continue to meet regularly with the Mayor and respective Cabinet Members, to ensure they were kept up to date with developments in portfolio areas and could effectively plan and manage scrutiny work plan issues.

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

RESOLVED that the report on the implementation and operation of the new Overview and Scrutiny arrangements and the work of the Committee and the four standing Scrutiny Panels, for the period June to December, 2014, be noted.

78. APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES: DANVM DRAINAGE COMMISSIONERS BOARD, DONCASTER EAST INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD AND BLACK DRAIN INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD (Minute No. 20 – 13th June, 2014)

Further to the above Minute, the Council considered a report which sought approval to appoint representatives to the Danvm Drainage Commissioners Board, the Doncaster East Internal Drainage Board (IDB) and the Black Drain IDB, following the recent resignation of Mr. Ken Knight.

Members noted that whilst the appointees' terms of office on the Danvm Drainage Commissioners Board and Doncaster East IDB would run to 31st October, 2016, to align with those of the existing Board representatives, there would be an opportunity for these appointments to be reviewed when appointments to Outside Bodies for the 2015/16 Municipal Year and beyond, were made at the Annual Council meeting in May, 2015. The appointment in respect of the Black Drain IDB was for a 1 year term and would therefore be reviewed with all other Outside Body appointments at the Annual Council meeting in May.

Following the Chair affording Members the opportunity to comment on the report, the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Glyn Jones, stated that the Drainage Boards had a significant role to play in managing water levels and flood risk within the area. The Council had made a major input into the work of the Drainage Boards by a financial contribution of almost £1m per year and the nomination of many of the Board Members. The Council had made appointments which reflected good local knowledge and interest in water level and flood management, and had recently enhanced its representation by nominating DMBC Engineers who could add expert technical knowledge. Subsequently, the Deputy Mayor proposed that the Council's support to the Drainage Boards could be further enhanced by nominating Officers with expertise and knowledge in good governance and financial matters.

In view of this, the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Glyn Jones, MOVED the following amendment to the recommendations in the report, which was SECONDED by Councillor Chris McGuinness, as follows:-

'That Council delegate the appointment of representatives to the Danvm Drainage Commissioners Board, Doncaster East Internal Drainage Board and the Black Drain Internal Drainage Board for the periods stated in the report, to the Mayor of Doncaster, Ros Jones, in consultation with the Director of Finance and Corporate Services, Simon Wiles, with a view to appointing Officers or other individuals that will provide additional professional expertise around governance and financial matters; and that future appointments to Internal Drainage Boards be made by the Executive.'

The Chair afforded Members in the Chamber the opportunity to speak on the Deputy Mayor's amendment to the report.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 21.4, a Recorded Vote was taken on the amendment proposed by the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Glyn Jones, which was declared as follows:-

For – 39

The Chair of Council, Councillor Pat Haith, Mayor of Doncaster, Ros Jones, Deputy Mayor, Councillor Glyn Jones and Councillors Iris Beech, Joe Blackham, Susan Bolton, Elsie Butler, Phil Cole, Tony Corden, Richard Cooper-Holmes, Sandra Holland, Linda Curran, Nuala Fennelly, Neil Gethin, Rachel Hodson, Charlie Hogarth, Mark Houlbrook, Frank Jackson, Mick Jameson, Alan Jones, Ken Keegan, Jane Kidd, Ted Kitchen, Sue Knowles, Tracey Leyland-Jepson, Chris McGuinness, Sue McGuinness, Christine Mills, John Mounsey, Jane Nightingale, Susan Phillips, Andy Pickering, Tony Revill, Kevin Rodgers, Craig Sahman, Dave Shaw, Paul Wray, Austen White and Sue Wilkinson.

Against – 11

Councillors Paul Bissett, Paul Coddington, Monty Cuthbert, John Cooke, Fred Gee, James Hart, Barbara Hoyle, Cynthia Ransome, Alan Smith, Jonathan Wood and Yvonne Woodcock.

Abstain – 1

Councillor Patricia Schofield.

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

RESOLVED that

- (1) Council delegates the appointment of representatives to the Danvm Drainage Commissioners Board, Doncaster East Internal Drainage Board and the Black Drain Internal Drainage Board for the periods stated in the report, to the Mayor of Doncaster, Ros Jones, in consultation with the Director of Finance and Corporate Services, Simon Wiles, with a view to appointing Officers or other individuals that will provide additional professional expertise around governance and financial matters; and
- (2) future appointments to Internal Drainage Boards be made by the Executive.

79. 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 Paul Bissett asked the Mayor of Doncaster:-

“On 25th September, 2014, I seconded a Motion. Item (b) of that Motion, to be exact which read as follows, ‘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’. We have now exceeded the 2 month period as stated. I, who seconded this Motion, have not had privilege of the information. As a corporate parent, we have been excluded from this process. Item (f) of the same Motion, which read as follows, ‘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’, confirmed that this will be reported to Cabinet within 2 months. I as a seconder to this Motion, feel excluded from this process?”

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

“This has not been reported to anyone as yet, because there has been a delay. Safeguarding children is important and we need to ensure we get proper things in place.”

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

“My question relates to salaries and allowances, which I will take in 2 parts. The first question relates to senior salaries and allowances, not just Officer’s salaries, but also regarding your salary. You said Mayor Jones that you would not take a penny more than the former Mayor, Peter Davies. I read in the newspaper that because you get an enhanced salary as being the Leader of the Labour Party of £10,000, so I believe that your salary is not as quoted. Can you clarify this?”

In relation to my second question, we are now heading for a period of deflation in macro-economic terms. If we are going to enter inflationary pressure, this may mean salaries being reduced. If this happens, will we see a reduction in the Senior Executive salaries in Doncaster, because they are getting more money than ever before. I think it is a disgrace that Executive salaries continue to go up?”

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

“I don’t think that you have read all the minutes of the meetings. I take the sum of money of £30,000 and don’t take any monies as being a Leader of a Group. I even pay my own car parking. I only take £30,000, not a penny more.”

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

Q. In relation to the second question I asked, I believe that it would be quite interesting for us to look at the Senior Management salaries. There are vast sums of money which could be saved on Senior Management salaries. I know you have said that it is all there on the web, but let's look at some of the senior posts of the Council who are getting 'fat cat' salaries, that we as a Council, get criticised for?"

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

"You are making presumptions on the way the economy is going. We as Labour Group, will look at this when we need to make budget reductions. I repeat again, the Chief Executive has frozen hers. I ask you, what have you done? I'm not crystal gazing of what's going to happen in the future."

Q. Councillor James Hart asked the Mayor of Doncaster:-

"Is the Council giving devolved powers to the SCR (Sheffield City Region)?"

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

"Nothing has been developed as yet, only simply the heads of terms. I will bring this to Members attention when I know more."

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

"The decision to close Residential Care Homes was made in June last year, which was endorsed by 49 Members, because of the need for modernisation and financial issues. But the Care Homes are still open which has resulted in a £1.7m overspend. How can you justify this?"

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

"I believe that this is justified, as we are a listening Cabinet. Listening to what the people were saying, when they said they wished to see the homes remain open, we took this on board. We delayed the process for people to come forward with any proposals and we agreed to delay the closures. If additional costs are incurred, we have a reserve fund in order to bridge the gap."

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

Q. "The decision on that day did not need to be made. You could have changed that decision instead of costing the tax payer £1.7m?"

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

"We listened to what the public said. The cost affects everyone not just taxpayers. Officers were requested to go out to the market and we will use Council reserves to accommodate this, to bridge the gap in the delayed savings."

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

Q. Councillor Fred Gee asked the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Glyn Jones:-

"On Monday, I walked around the old Council Netherhall Road Offices that have been closed. When I visited, the heating was on full. How much does this cost to heat the building. Also, there must be £100,000 of office furniture abandoned here. Has any of this furniture been offered to Refurnish or to any other community groups or charities. There are a vast amount of swivel chairs and 15 air conditioning units. When this Council quarks about having no money and I as a ratepayer pay for this, it's a standing joke. How many other Council properties are there with the heating on full?"

A. The Deputy Mayor gave the following response:-

"This is not within my Portfolio area, but I will try to answer the question. I believe that the Netherhall Road Offices were sold some months ago, so I am at a loss how someone can just enter the premises off the street. I understand that the offices are being remodelled. In terms of office furniture, some have been used. It's my understanding that the furniture that could have been used has been used. The Council did have an auction a couple of months ago, but the furniture may have been deemed unsuitable. My colleague, Councillor Joe Blackham, may be able to provide you with further information."

Councillor Joe Blackham gave the following response:-

A. "I would like to reiterate what the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Jones, has said. The offices are no longer within the ownership of the Council. I believe that a lot of community groups have benefited from being given furniture for free, but I will enquire why the furniture was not offered to all community groups. I am aware that the community groups around the Thorne area have been offered some of the furniture. The old office furniture I believe, is of little value."

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

Q. "You need to take a gas reading of the premises. I have been told that the heating has been kept on because of the computer equipment. Refurnish have not been informed of this. One individual there is being paid to 'skip' the furniture. It seems such a shame?"

A. Councillor Joe Blackham gave the following response:-

"I have already provided a response to your questions. The person in ownership of the building is 'skipping' the furniture, which means that it is of no value."

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

Q. Councillor Patricia Schofield asked Councillor Joe Blackham:-

"One of your responsibilities under your Portfolio area is enforcement. When are you going to do something about fly grazing?"

A. Councillor Joe Blackham gave the following response:-

"Thank you Councillor Schofield that is an excellent question and presents me the opportunity to advise Council that the new Fly Grazing Protocol is now agreed with our partner agencies and functioning. I am aware that you are referring to the 3 horses placed on the land of one of your constituents by South Yorkshire Police due to highway safety concerns. The Fly Grazing Protocol recognises that private land owners should not be responsible for the cost of dealing with this problem and therefore, Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council will bear the cost of their removal. I have this morning had sight of an e-mail to you from the Enforcement Team explaining this."

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15.7, Councillor Patricia Schofield asked Councillor Joe Blackham, the following supplementary question:-

"As you are aware, in Wales there is legislation to deal with fly grazing, but as you know, no legislation regarding fly grazing has been put in place as this is being debated in the House of Lords. I have been in contact with people who have said that it will not be put in place before the General Election in May. If you are referring to the 3 horses in Finningley, they are still there. The landowner did not put the horses in the field. The horses were put there by the Police therefore, why should the landowner have to pay for this. When I spoke to one of the Officers from the Council in the Gypsy and Traveller Team, he said that he was not running after horses, as he got tired. Can you do something about this?"

A. Councillor Joe Blackham gave the following response:-

“I have just explained, the land owner will not be responsible for the cost of removing these horses, it would be unreasonable to expect him to do so. We will deal with the problem in line with our new protocol. It does however raise the question why nothing was done by the previous Cabinet to address this problem.”

Q. Councillor Cynthia Ransome asked Councillor Joe Blackham:-

“Further to your response to Councillor Schofield, as a former Cabinet Member, the Horse Strategy was my responsibility. It was looked at in detail and the reason it didn't progress was because of the cost.

My question relates to the answer you gave me at the last Full Council meeting. I find the answer unsatisfactory when enforcement was stated by you to be 'unfit for purpose'. How can this be so when awards were won, the Council was a more orderly run organisation and residents respected the Council. The One Stop Shop you speak of is falling short on time, communication and along time is taken on complaints being actioned. When will Planning Enforcement be active?”

A. Councillor Joe Blackham gave the following response:-

“When the Planning Enforcement Team is fully integrated, I will make the announcement. There needs to be negotiations with the Trade Unions. It will be part of the Enforcement Hub. As for what I said, it is not the Officers who are not 'fit for purpose' it's the organisation which is not 'fit for purpose'. We should not be working in silos. I want an Enforcement Team which is functional and fully flexible, which will result in anyone who contacts Enforcement can expect to get a resolution to their problem.”

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15.7, Councillor Cynthia Ransome asked Councillor Joe Blackman, the following supplementary question:-

Q. “You promised me this a long time ago, but you have evaded the question. The only silos were Planning and Parking which are specialised?”

A. Councillor Joe Blackham gave the following response:-

“You failed to understand the point. You know that the Council operates in silos. I want a single point of contact for Enforcement. They will need training. I want a One Stop Shop with one contact point.”

Q. Councillor Jonathan Wood asked Councillor Joe Blackham:-

“You have said that Councillor Ransome has failed to understand your response. Can you define this. Councillor Ransome asked if you can provide us with a date?”

A. Councillor Joe Blackham gave the following response:-

“When the situation is resolved, I will come to Council and inform you. We need to wait and see the outcome of the consultation, and I can’t operate on the basis of a crystal ball. The question you have asked tries to undermine what we are trying to do. We are, in every aspect, achieving this. This Authority is far superior to what it was.”

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

Q. “Are you saying that in every aspect since you came into power, that everything is better. This is deliberately misleading?”

A. Councillor Joe Blackham gave the following response:-

“I don’t mix words. I won’t make any pledges to you. Jonathan, you deliberately twist what I have said to make your own construction of it. Every element of this Local Authority is better, no exceptions.”

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

Q. Councillor Cynthia Ransome asked Councillor Nuala Fennelly:-

“Councillor Corden kindly sent me a letter in response to my question at the last Council meeting, where it referred to £6,000 being spent by the Council on advertising to combat truancy. My question is how do you measure this. In the past administration, it was the Neighbourhood Response Team who dealt with this issue. In relation to the written response I received stating that the cost of bringing a case to court was £595, in my view, it should not be an issue of there having to be a court case, it should be about children being picked up to serve as a deterrent. Why is this not happening now and how is the effectiveness of radio advertising measured?”

A. Councillor Nuala Fennelly gave the following response:-

“£595 is the cost for each court case. The issue is that truancy causes a lot of problems for parents. As Councillors, we have a duty as corporate parents. It is important to ensure that children attend school. I will provide you with a more detailed written response to your question.”

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

In the absence of Councillor Bob Johnson, Cabinet Member, for Regeneration and Growth, Leisure and Tourism, and Veteran’s Champion, the Chair informed Members that any questions to Councillor Johnson should be submitted in writing to the Executive Office after this meeting and that the Cabinet Member would respond accordingly.

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 Jonathan Wood asked Councillor Christine Mills:-

“As Cabinet Member for Housing, you announced last week the introduction of a tenants tax in Hexthorpe of £500, to be added to their rent, for anyone wanting to rent a house in Hexthorpe. Will you be specific, what measures have been used. There must be 6 forms of legislation that can be used. An example of this is a Section 125 Notice. Which legislation have you used and how many times have you used it?”

A. Councillor Christine Mills gave the following response:-

“The Selective Licensing Scheme and Valuation License Scheme are very much about enforcement which sits in Councillor Joe Blackham’s Portfolio area. Councillor Blackham has indicated that he will respond to your question.”

A. Councillor Joe Blackham gave the following response:-

“Thank you for the question. I have not got the detail to hand which is in the public domain, but I will ensure you that you will receive a written response. I am concerned that no-one has registered any interest at this meeting and thought that you and Councillor Fred Gee, would have felt obliged to have registered an interest. The Selective Licensing Scheme is being introduced to address the issue in Hexthorpe. Similar schemes exist elsewhere in the country. We need all the details at hand before we can take action. I am surprised that neither of you have not registered in the book.”

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

Q. “I am not here as a landlord and it is not for you to criticise that. I do have a second home in Doncaster. The Mayor has got a second property and you Councillor Blackham, own land in the Borough. I’m surprised that you can’t recall or share this with us now, particularly in view of you being the one who has made the decision?”

A. Councillor Joe Blackham gave the following response:-

“The reason why I can’t recall this decision is because we have gone through realms of consultation. There has been no great concerns registered with the landlords and the residents have welcomed this with open arms for a Selective Licensing Scheme to be put in place. If successful, this should raise property values and improve the environment in Hexthorpe. I see this as a ‘win’ ‘win’ situation, for both the landlords and the residents.”

Q. Councillor Fred Gee asked Councillor Christine Mills:-

“In relation to your response to Councillor Wood’s question, to say that total consultation has been undertaken is rubbish. I am Chair of the South Yorkshire Landlords Association and we found out about this decision 3 days before. The tenants did not receive the form. I’ve spent 10 years working with the Council regarding the Landlord Accreditation Scheme and I applaud Mayor Jones for bringing in the Accreditation Scheme. When we tried to bring the Scheme in Hexthorpe, it was because of how these people were living. They were living in dirty conditions. How can you make a decision on this. I am calling in this decision, because I need all the information in order to make a proper interpretation?”

A. Councillor Joe Blackham gave the following response:-

“You, as a Councillor, early in the process, were told about the introduction of the Selective Licensing Scheme. If you go on Google, there is no record of this South Yorkshire Landlords group you claim to be the Chair of. Therefore, how do we know that this organisation exists. You have got a Call-in meeting on 23rd January and we will respond at that time. I am 110% committed to the Selective Licensing Scheme which is a ‘win’ ‘win’ situation for landlords and for residents. It doesn’t mean there will be a cost to the tenant. It’s whether landlords want to pass the cost on to those paying the rent; the tenant.”

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

No questions were put to Councillor John Mounsey, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee.

80. 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 19th November, 2014.
- B. South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority held on 20th October, 24th November and 15th December, 2014, and Section 41 Briefing Note for December, 2014.
- C. Sheffield City Region Combined Authority held on 6th October and 27th November, 2014.
- D. South Yorkshire Pensions Authority held on 27th November, 2014.