

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 9TH NOVEMBER, 2017

An EXTRAORDINARY MEETING of the COUNCIL was held at the COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICE on THURSDAY, 9TH NOVEMBER, 2017, at 1.00 pm.

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor George Derx
Vice-Chair - Councillor Majid Khan
Deputy Mayor - Councillor Glyn Jones

Councillors Nick Allen, Duncan Anderson, Joe Blackham, Nigel Cannings, John Cooke, Mick Cooper, Steve Cox, Linda Curran, Susan Durant, Nuala Fennelly, John Gilliver, Martin Greenhalgh, Pat Haith, John Healy, Rachel Hodson, Charlie Hogarth, Mark Houlbrook, Richard A Jones, Kenneth Keegan, Nikki McDonald, Chris McGuinness, Sue McGuinness, John McHale, Bill Mordue, John Mounsey, David Nevett, Jane Nightingale, Ian Pearson, Andy Pickering, Cynthia Ransome, Andrea Robinson, Kevin Rodgers, Dave Shaw, Derek Smith, Austen White, Jonathan Wood and Paul Wray.

APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from The Mayor of Doncaster Ros Jones and Councillors Lani-Mae Ball, Nigel Ball, Iris Beech, Rachael Blake, Bev Chapman, Phil Cole, Tony Corden, Jane Cox, Neil Gethin, Sean Gibbons, David Hughes, Eva Hughes, Jane Kidd, Tina Reid and Sue Wilkinson.

45 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.

Councillor Kevin Rodgers declared an interest in agenda item 4 by virtue of being a Member of Yorkshire Devolution Movement.

46 DONCASTER DEVOLUTION PROPOSAL - THE HOLDING OF A COMMUNITY POLL.

Council received a report seeking approval to hold a "Community Poll" seeking the views of the Doncaster Electorate about the next stages in Devolution proposal.

In introducing this item Deputy Mayor, Councillor Glyn Jones stated that:-

"Today the Council is discussing regional devolution and the potential for holding a borough-wide poll of residents in Doncaster. As you know, regional devolution is a vitally important issue. It has been discussed a number of times in this Chamber and with Elected Members over the last two years.

Devolution will impact on our residents, businesses and our borough for the next 30 years or more, so we must aim to get the best possible deal for Doncaster. Colleagues

will recall that in 2015 when the Government was pursuing 'City Region' devolution deals, Doncaster Council agreed to be a part of the Sheffield City Region proposal.

However, since then, a number of things have changed:

- The UK has voted for Brexit
- Chesterfield and Bassetlaw no longer want to become full members of the Sheffield City Region
- The Government has agreed new devolution models; and
- Yorkshire Councils have brought forward proposals for a wider Yorkshire devolution agreement.

We are clear that Doncaster must not be left out of the devolution process, something that Council has supported.

However, given the changing circumstances, the Mayor and Council colleagues have indicated that they would like the opportunity to explore a wider Yorkshire devolution agreement.

Indeed, in addition to cross-party support within Doncaster Council, proposals for a wider Yorkshire agreement are backed by Doncaster Chamber of Commerce, the CBI, Institute of Directors, TUC and our MPs.

In a recent survey, 70% of local businesses also said they would prefer to ultimately be part of a Yorkshire devolution deal.

Of course, the one group of people who have not had the chance to express their preferred option moving forward, are Doncaster's residents and they are the most important stakeholder of all.

Unfortunately the Mayor is unable to attend Council today. She has asked me to pass on her apologies. However, she has asked me to reiterate her support for a Community Poll.

Given the cost, it is not something we would do over every issue. However, this is an important change which will impact Doncaster and change governance arrangements in our region.

We therefore need to be very clear about Doncaster's position moving forward and feel confident that it has the support of local residents and businesses.

As a Council, we will do our best to achieve their ambitions. We've already heard from businesses, trade unions and politicians on the issue. Now we need to hear from local people.

I can also confirm to colleagues that this morning Barnsley Council has unanimously approved a similar poll of its residents with the support of their Labour, Conservative and Independent Councillors so I recommend this report to Council".

The Chair of Council, Councillor George Derx, then afforded all Members in the Chamber the opportunity of commenting on the report and the following issues were

raised.

A number of Members expressed the view that Doncaster residents should be given clear information to enable them to make a clear informed judgement in respect of the question. Some of the areas of clarification that may assist the public included:-

- Understanding the powers and functions of a city region;
- Understanding the relationship between the Council and a city region;
- Clarification on whether the City Region would lead to the Council relinquishing any of its powers; and
- What would need to happen to enable the Council to formally withdraw from the earlier decision to support the Sheffield City Region deal understanding the mechanisms for taking forward the wider Yorkshire deal if that was agreed as the preferred option.

Members also discussed the value of the Community Poll in gauging public opinion. Whilst recognising the Poll was not binding on the Council, concerns were raised regarding the extent to which the outcome of the Poll would inform a future decision if for example there was a low response rate.

On behalf of the Conservative Group, Councillor Jonathan Wood proposed the following amendment to the Motion which was seconded by Councillor Nick Allen, a copy of which was tabled at the meeting:-

“based on a 50% turnout a promise be made by Councillors to respect the will of the people and vote to see the peoples opinion through and vote accordingly as Councillors”

At this point, the Chair of Council, Councillor George Derx then adjourned the meeting for 15 minutes in order to allow discussions to be held to clarify the wording of the motion.

The meeting reconvened at 2.00 p.m.

Following discussions, on behalf of the Conservative Group, Councillor Jonathan Wood withdrew the original wording of the amendment and clarified the revised wording of the amendment to the Motion which was seconded by the Deputy Mayor Councillor Glyn Jones:-

“to give effect to the result of the peoples poll and act as Councillors accordingly”.

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

For – 39

Against – 0

Abstain – 1

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

The Chair afforded all Members in the Chamber, the opportunity to speak on the Substantive Motion and invited the Deputy Mayor to respond.

In responding to the amendment the Deputy Mayor confirmed it had always been the intention to use this information to gauge public opinion and seek the best deal for Doncaster. He reiterated the exercise would be a Poll and not an election and confirmed that residents on the electoral register would be given the opportunity to vote. The Council would also welcome any views put forward by businesses or other groups and organisations to help inform any future decision.

In regard to other key issues raised the Deputy Mayor confirmed the Council would ensure that the public were provided with fair and balanced information in respect of the issues around devolution before being asked to indicate their preference.

In respect of the Council's previous decision to be a member of the Sheffield City Region there was now a will from a significant number of local authorities in the region to press forward with a wider Yorkshire deal. The Government had previously made it clear it would not preclude South Yorkshire from being part of a wider Yorkshire deal. It was reiterated that as a region Yorkshire's size and footprint has a strong reputation and brand through its size, scale and economic footprint and would potentially offer greater opportunities for Doncaster. The Council was seeking to push forward with this proposal to maximise benefits for Doncaster and the wider region.

A vote was taken on the Substantive Motion was declared as follows:-

For – 39

Against – 0

Abstain – 0

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

RESOLVED that Council:-

- (1) agrees to the holding of a Community Poll seeking the views of the Doncaster electorate about the next stages in any Devolution proposal;
- (2) approves the proposed Poll question as set out at Appendix A of the report,
- (3) gives delegated authority to the Council's Returning Officer to make the necessary arrangements to carry out such a poll; and
- (4) pledges to give effect to the result of the people's poll and act as Councillors accordingly.

CHAIR: _____

DATE: _____