

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING

30TH JULY, 2015

A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL was held at the CIVIC OFFICE, WATERDALE, DONCASTER, on THURSDAY, 30TH JULY, 2015 at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor Paul Wray
Vice-Chair - Councillor David Nevett
Mayor - Ros Jones
Deputy Mayor - Councillor Glyn Jones

Councillors Nick Allen, Nigel Ball, Iris Beech, Joe Blackham, Rachael Blake, Elsie Butler, Bev Chapman, John Cooke, Tony Corden, Jane Cox, Steve Cox, Jessie Credland, Linda Curran, George Derx, Nuala Fennelly, Neil Gethin, Sean Gibbons, Pat Haith, James Hart, John Healy, Charlie Hogarth, Mark Houlbrook, Eva Hughes, Alan Jones, R. Allan Jones, Majid Khan, Jane Kidd, Pat Knight, Sue Knowles, Chris McGuinness, Sue McGuinness, John McHale, Bill Mordue, Jane Nightingale, Andy Pickering, Cynthia Ransome, Tony Revill, Kevin Rodgers, Craig Sahman, Alan Smith, Clive Stone, Austen White, Sue Wilkinson and Jonathan Wood.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from the Councillors Phil Cole, Susan Durant, Rachel Hodson, Sandra Holland, Ken Keegan, Ted Kitchen, John Mounsey and Dave Shaw.

22. RECENT DEATH OF MR. TONY STOREY, O.B.E., HONORARY FREEMAN OF THE BOROUGH AND FORMER HEADTEACHER OF HAYFIELD SCHOOL

Elected Members, Officers and members of the public, observed a minute's silence as a mark of respect and remembrance in relation to the recent death of Mr. Tony Storey, O.B.E., Honorary Freeman of the Borough and the former Headteacher of Hayfield School, who died suddenly in hospital on 3rd June, 2015.

23. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Rachael Blake declared an interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 13, 'Motion by Councillor Bill Mordue', by virtue of being employed by HS2 Limited.

24. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF COUNCIL HELD ON 22ND MAY, 2015

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Council held on 22nd May, 2015, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

25. 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 Paul Wray, made the following Announcements:-

“I am pleased to inform Elected Members and members of the public that Doncaster will be hosting Yorkshire Day this Saturday, 1st August, 2015.

We are proud to welcome Civic Leaders from across the Yorkshire Region to join us for a programme of events that will begin with a parade through the Town Centre at 9.45am, led by Armthorpe Elmfield Band.

The parade will pass by the Frenchgate Centre and will arrive at the Minster for a Service of Celebration at 10.45am. All are welcome.

There are activities in our award winning market, afternoon teas in the Mansion House and Doncaster Brewery is launching a keepsake beer.

I hope you will all consider coming along and help us to showcase to the region, all that is good about Doncaster.

I would also like to congratulate one of our youngsters, Bailey Matthews, who is only 8 years old and managed to complete a Triathlon on Saturday. Bailey who has cerebral palsy, let go of his walking aid (walker) to finish the race unaided. Bailey is a very brave young man and we should applaud him.”

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

“Congratulations to Councillor John McHale and Tim Hazletine who have both received a ‘Locality 2015 Public Sector Hero award’. Councillor McHale for the ‘Keep it Local’ category and Tim Hazletine for the ‘Growing Community Enterprise’ category. I am delighted that Doncaster is showcasing what we can do.”

On behalf of the Chief Executive who was unable to attend the meeting, Peter Dale, the Director of Regeneration and Environment, made the following announcement:-

“I would like to introduce to Members, Damian Hall, the new Director of Learning Opportunities and Skills, who is here in the Chamber this evening. Damian formally starts in his post at the end of August.”

Councillor Pat Knight, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing, made the following announcement:-

“The Health and Wellbeing Strategy Refresh is out for consultation. If Members have not already received an email about this, they will be doing so shortly. If any Members have any comments on the Strategy, they can respond via www.surveymonkey.com.”

Councillor Bill Mordue, Cabinet Member for Business, Skills, Tourism and Culture, made the following announcement:-

“I would like to provide Members with a brief update on the (International) Jet Ski event which was held last weekend at the Lakeside. This is a good news story for Doncaster. Our Jet Ski run attracted record numbers; 7 to 8,000 visitors, 900 riders and support staff. Apparently the weather on Sunday was appalling. We have had a lot of publicity around this event. The Yorkshire Post took some good pictures that were streamed to over 100 countries which provided some good images of Doncaster and in particular, the Lakeside. There were over 7,000 followers on social media. The Jet Ski sport has huge potential and is shown on the Sky Sports channel. This promotes a good image for Doncaster and the Lakeside. DMBC received excellent praise from the promoters/sponsors of the event. I would like to thank Brian Hill and Richard Young from Doncaster Council, for what turned out to be a great event.”

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

No questions from the public had been received for this meeting.

27. CORPORATE PLAN REFRESH (Minute No. 23 – 13th June, 2014)

Further to the above Minute, the Council considered a report, presented by the Mayor of Doncaster, Ros Jones, which sought Members approval of the refreshed Corporate Plan.

It was reported that Full Council had already approved a three year Corporate Plan at its meeting held in June last year. As a number of its objectives had been successfully met, such as coming out of Government Intervention and establishing the Children’s Trust, it had been decided to undertake some small changes to reflect these successes and detail new challenges. It was also an opportunity to introduce Outcomes Based Accountability as the method of managing progress against the Corporate Plan; the starting point of which was to reword the Corporate Plan outcomes as whole population outcomes.

Members noted that detailed discussions had taken place with the Executive Board, Portfolio Holders and Directorate Management Teams. The Corporate Plan outcomes and objectives had been considered and refined, with key measures identified. A copy of the refreshed Corporate Plan with associated indicators and measures, was attached as an Appendix to the report.

It was also reported that Heads of Service Plans were under development, alongside the PDR process, which would include the additional indicators or measures that did not appear in the Corporate Plan and would also capture Directorate objectives which could be escalated to a Corporate Plan level, if appropriate.

In response to the written submission of a series of recommendations by the Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee following the draft Corporate Plan being considered at an informal workshop meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee on 1st July, the Mayor stated that she was grateful to the Committee for considering the plan and was pleased that Committee Members were supportive of what had been produced. The Mayor noted that the comments made by Committee Members were very much in line with the Cabinet's own views, for example the importance of improving Schools and education. The Mayor also pointed out that she had written back to the Committee to provide reassurance that these important issues would be strongly managed as part of the plan and that progress would be regularly reported. Other issues raised by the Committee as part of the process included comments on associated operational issues such as the Government's closure of the Independent Living Fund, the location of air quality monitoring stations and bringing empty properties back into use.

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

RESOLVED that the refreshed Corporate Plan, be approved.

28. COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY 2014/17 REFRESH AND OUTLINE OF SAFER STRONGER DONCASTER PARTNERSHIP PRIORITIES 2015-16

The Council received a report, presented by Councillor Chris McGuinness, Cabinet Member for Communities and the Voluntary Sector, which provided an update on the 2015 refresh of the 2014/17 Community Safety Strategy.

It was reported that the Strategy was a statutory plan which required endorsement by Council, but was produced and owned by the wider Safer Stronger Doncaster Partnership who had a legal duty to work together to reduce reoffending, deal with crime and disorder, anti-social behaviour, alcohol and substance misuse, and any other behaviour which had a negative effect on the local environment, and to produce a plan outlining how this would be achieved.

Members noted that the refreshed Strategy provided an overview of the key achievements in the last twelve months and how the refreshed priorities sought to achieve better outcomes for the people of Doncaster. Whilst the public consultation had provided reassurance that the current priorities were the priorities that the public wanted addressing, the challenges that remained were also acknowledged which included responding to new threats from the use of Novel Psychoactive Substances (legal highs) and working with the Authority's partners to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour issues, using early intervention and prevention, as well as exploiting new legislation.

It was also reported that protecting vulnerable people would also remain a key challenge and that support to the Safeguarding Adult and Children's Board would be continued, including developing stronger links and working together to tackle areas such as Domestic Abuse, Child and Adult Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. Through strong enforcement approach, supported by early intervention and prevention and responding effectively when needed, it was noted that the citizens of Doncaster would see improved outcomes in terms of feeling safer, being safer and getting the support they needed with access to improved services.

Councillor Chris McGuinness was pleased to note that the consultation hadn't solely relied on the Internet responses, as others had done so in the past. Councillor McGuinness also reported that a briefing for all Members would be held in due course on how the Council managed Anti-Social Behaviour.

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

In response to concerns raised by Councillor Cynthia Ransome with regard to there being a slight reduction in Anti-Social behaviour by 4% in the last quarter, Councillor Chris McGuinness reported that due to changes in the law on Anti-Social Behaviour legislation, there were now other means that the Council could use to address this issue. He explained that the key issue for the Council was how the Council would enforce these powers. Councillor McGuinness undertook to raise this issue with the relevant Officer.

Councillor McGuinness encouraged all Members to attend the seminar, which he felt would be beneficial to Members. He also reported that he was scheduled to meet with South Yorkshire Police on Monday afternoon and encouraged Members to contact him if they had any issues they would like him to bring to the attention of the Police.

Councillor Jonathan Wood referred to the refreshed priorities of the Community Safety Strategy, as outlined in paragraph 5 of the report, which highlighted the reduction of Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour with a focus on restorative justice and visibility within communities, as well as the use of new tools and powers to address these issues.

Councillor Wood stated that under the former administration, the Council had introduced a 'Litter Bugs' Restorative Justice Scheme, which gave children the option to tidy up the area where they lived instead of paying a fine. He welcomed Restorative Justice and asked Councillor McGuinness to look at whether enhanced proposals could be introduced, particularly in relation to children and people disposing of litter improperly, in order for people to recognise the implications of what they had done and for them to respect their communities, and the consequences if they did not do so.

In response, Councillor Chris McGuinness stated that under the Restorative Justice Plan, he was aware that there was a recruitment plan for volunteers. He gave an undertaking that Officers would provide Councillor Wood with a briefing note on the current position.

RESOLVED that the refreshed content of the Community Safety Strategy 2014/17, be approved.

29. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15

The Council considered the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report presented by Councillor Jane Nightingale, Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC), which highlighted the progress of Doncaster Council's Overview and Scrutiny function during 2014/15. The report also provided a short summary of some of the work carried out by OSMC and its four Standing Panels during 2014/15 and also highlighted some of the key achievements and the impacts that Overview and Scrutiny had made over the past year, and identified priorities for 2015/16.

Councillor Nightingale initially placed on record her appreciation to Members, the Executive, Officers, Partners, Stakeholders and the public, who had attended meetings and contributed to the Overview and Scrutiny process. She hoped that this report reflected the value that an effective Overview and Scrutiny function could bring to the organisation. She also looked forward as to how Overview and Scrutiny could positively contribute to improving the delivery of services such as health and adult social care, environment, children's issues, regeneration, housing and within communities, in delivering the Corporate Plan whilst the Council continued to effectively manage its finances.

Councillor Nightingale drew Members attention to the key impacts and achievements which had arisen from the work of Overview and Scrutiny which included all aspects of the Overview and Scrutiny process, policy review and development, reviewing performance, the work of partners, and providing a critical friend role and appropriate challenge.

Councillor Nightingale also highlighted that a new outcome focused structure had been introduced to Scrutiny in June 2014, with the OSMC undertaking a stronger management and co-ordination role. It was intended to continue to maintain a greater focus on a smaller number of important issues that Overview and Scrutiny could review in detail. The Panels focused on reviewing topics in-depth to provide suggestions for improvement on such areas as educational attainment, the new waste collection contract, the delivery of additional housing, loneliness and social isolation.

Members noted that a new Health and Adult Social Care Panel had been established which had developed stronger links with the Health and Wellbeing Board and other partners, to support improvements to the health of people in the Borough. The Panel also carried out the Council's formal Health Scrutiny responsibilities. This change had provided flexibility for Overview and Scrutiny to respond to important issues of public concern that had arisen during the course of the year. An example of which was the review undertaken of the Council and partnership arrangements to protect against Child Sexual Exploitation.

It was also reported that Overview and Scrutiny continued to hold a number of training workshops including Chair's Training, Scrutiny and Challenge and Questioning and Listening Skills.

In conclusion, Councillor Nightingale once again thanked all Overview and Scrutiny Members, Partners, Stakeholders, Officers and members of the public, who had contributed to the Overview and Scrutiny process last year and she hoped that Overview and Scrutiny would continue to build on its successes.

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

Councillor Jonathan Wood wished for it to be placed on record his disappointment at the content of the report, as he felt that it didn't fully reflect the views of all Members sitting outside of the Executive. He held the view that opposition Members were not fully engaged in the process, as they were not afforded the opportunity to Chair a Scrutiny Panel. He was also of the opinion that whilst Scrutiny was able to ask questions of the Executive, they were unable to challenge the Executive.

In response to a question from Councillor R. Allan Jones in relation to 3,500 empty properties around the Borough that should be put into use and that Overview and Scrutiny should look at this issue, Councillor John McHale reported that the Regeneration and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel comprising Members from all Political Groups, had produced a very comprehensive suite of recommendations which had arisen from the Panel's review of the Council's Assets and Housing. He gave an undertaking for Officers to provide Councillor Jones with the details.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2014/15, be noted.

30. APPOINTMENT OF CONSERVATIVE COUNCILLOR REPRESENTATIVE TO THE SHEFFIELD CITY REGION COMBINED AUTHORITY'S AUDIT COMMITTEE

The Council considered a report, presented by Roger Harvey, the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services, and Monitoring Officer, which sought the appointment of a Conservative Councillor as a representative of the Council, to serve on the Sheffield City Region Combined Authority's (SCRCA) Audit Committee which was in accordance with the SCRCA's political balance requirements. This appointment would be in addition to the Council's current representative.

It was reported that at its meeting held on 7th March 2013, Council agreed that Doncaster Council would join the SCRCA, which became a legal entity on 1st April, 2014. Since that time, the Council had also appointed Member representatives to the SCRCA's Overview and Scrutiny, Transport and Audit Committees. Having previously appointed the Council's Chair of Audit Committee, Councillor Austen White (Labour) to serve on the SCRCA Audit Committee for the 2015/16 Municipal Year, the Council had been informed that Doncaster was also entitled to appoint 1 Conservative Councillor to sit on this body.

Members noted that in terms of the selection of nominees, the SCRCA had indicated that its preferred arrangement was for the same Local Authority representatives to sit on both the SCRCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the SCRCA Audit Committee, as meetings of both Committees had been aligned to meet on the same day, although member Authorities were free to nominate different representatives if they so wished.

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

RESOLVED that Councillor R. Allan Jones, be appointed as the Conservative representative on the SCRCA Audit Committee.

31. PROPOSED REVISION TO THE COMPOSITION OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE HEARINGS SUB-COMMITTEE (Minute No. 16 – 13th June, 2014 and Audit Committee Minute No. 6(2) – 16th July, 2015)

Further to the above Minutes, the Council considered a report presented by Roger Harvey, the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services, and Monitoring Officer, which sought approval to revise the composition of the Audit Committee's Hearings Sub-Committee, by discontinuing Parish Council representation on the Audit Committee's Hearings Sub-Committee.

It was reported that as the Audit Committee had responsibility for corporate governance that incorporated ethical governance (the focus of the former Standards Committee) it was agreed by Council at its meeting on 13th June, 2014, to disband the Standards Committee and transfer its functions to the Audit Committee. To enable the Audit Committee to have a mechanism in place to deal with complaints against Councillors that could not be resolved informally, it was also agreed to establish a Hearings Sub-Committee of the Audit Committee. This Sub-Committee currently comprised two co-opted Parish Council representatives and two co-opted Independent (non-Councillor) representatives. As the terms of office of the Parish Council representatives on the Hearing Sub-Committee were due to expire on 20th July 2015, it was necessary to review the composition of the Sub-Committee.

Members noted that the Localism Act 2011, introduced a new process with a much greater emphasis on resolving complaints on a more informal basis. Since its establishment in 2012, the Hearings Sub-Committee had never been convened. Furthermore, the need for Parish Council representation in any hearings process was no longer a statutory requirement. Accordingly, at its meeting held on 16th July 2015, the Audit Committee recommended to Full Council that the Parish Council representation on the Audit Committee's Hearings Sub-Committee be discontinued on the understanding that this was no longer a statutory requirement and that the membership of the Hearings Sub-Committee, if it should ever meet, would still include an independent element by way of the existing Independent (non-councillor) Co-optees who served on that body.

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

RESOLVED that Parish Council representation on the Audit Committee's Hearings Sub-Committee should cease with immediate effect for the reasons outlined within paragraphs 6 and 7 of the report.

32. CHANGES TO THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION

The Council considered a report presented by Roger Harvey, the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services, and Monitoring Officer, which sought approval to revise the Council's Constitution in response to an issue which had arisen since the Constitution was last reviewed in October 2012.

It was reported that the Council's Constitution set out how the Council operated, how decisions were made and the procedures which were followed to ensure that these were efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. Some of the processes were required by law, whilst others were chosen by the Council. Paragraph 25.1 of Council Procedure Rules, required that Members must stand when addressing the Council Chamber; a requirement which dated back to the time when Full Council was based at the Mansion House. Standing to speak was necessary in order to ensure that the speaker could be heard.

Members noted that the installation of a modern audio system in a new purpose-built Council Chamber had made the need to stand for this reason unnecessary. Standing to address the Chamber could also be seen as a mark of respect to the Chair. Currently, if a Member had difficulties standing due to disability or ill health, they were required to seek a dispensation from the Chair to allow them to speak whilst remaining seated. However, requiring Members who may be disabled, or otherwise have mobility issues, to have to apply for a dispensation in such circumstances, would be contrary to the principles of the Equality Act 2010.

It was also noted that arrangements were in hand to expand the current facilities within the Council Chamber to allow for the audio and video recording of Council meetings, and potentially other meetings in the Chamber. It was anticipated that a report on these arrangements, including the introduction of a protocol and any necessary further changes to the Constitution, would be considered at the next meeting of Council.

Councillor James Hart, along with other Members of the Conservative Group voiced their dissent to removing the requirement for Members to stand whilst addressing the Chamber. They held the view that the current arrangements allowed members of the public to see which Members were speaking and where they were seated. The Conservative Group proposed that Members continue to remain standing whilst addressing the Chamber and that the specific dispensation remain for those Members who were unable to fulfil the requirement to stand, because of health reasons, disability or other personal reasons.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 21.4, a recorded vote was taken on the recommendations contained within the report, which was declared as follows:-

For – 36

Chair of Council, Councillor Paul Wray, Mayor of Doncaster, Ros Jones, Deputy Mayor Councillor Glyn Jones and Councillors Nigel Ball, Iris Beech, Joe Blackham, Rachael Blake, Elsie Butler, John Cooke, Tony Corden, Jessie Credland, Linda Curran, George Derx, Nuala Fennelly, Neil Gethin, Pat Haith, John Healy, Charlie Hogarth, Mark Houlbrook, Eva Hughes, Alan Jones, Majid Khan, Jane Kidd, Pat Knight, Sue Knowles, Chris McGuinness, Sue McGuinness, John McHale, Bill Mordue, Jane Nightingale, Tony Revill, Kevin Rodgers, Craig Sahman, Clive Stone, Austen White and Sue Wilkinson.

Against – 12

Vice-Chair, Councillor David Nevett and Councillors Nick Allen, Bev Chapman, Jane Cox, Steve Cox, Sean Gibbons, James Hart, R. Allan Jones, Andy Pickering, Cynthia Ransome, Alan Smith and Jonathan Wood.

Abstain – 0

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

RESOLVED that paragraph 25.1 of the Council Procedure Rules relating to the requirement for Members to stand whilst addressing the Council Chamber, be removed.

33. TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING MOTION, WRITTEN NOTICE OF WHICH HAS BEEN GIVEN BY COUNCILLOR BILL MORDUE AND SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR JOE BLACKHAM, IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 16.1

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 16.1, a Motion was submitted by Councillor Bill Mordue and Seconded by Councillor Joe Blackham:-

“For too long a disproportionate amount of public money has been allocated to major infrastructure projects in London and the South East, hindering economic growth in Yorkshire and failing to address the north-south economic divide.

Doncaster Council is deeply disappointed by the Government’s broken promise to deliver major transport infrastructure improvement works in the region. This Council calls on the Government to reinstate its plans for electrification of the Trans Pennine and Midland Mainline routes, and proceed with the full East Coast Main Line crossing programme, by ensuring that funding is put in place to end the current ‘pause’, and confirming a new timetable for delivery of these important projects.

Failure to do so will negatively impact passengers and businesses, and seriously brings into question this Government’s stated commitment to the Northern Powerhouse.”

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

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

For – 47

Against – 0

Abstentions – 0

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

RESOLVED that for too long a disproportionate amount of public money has been allocated to major infrastructure projects in London and the South East, hindering economic growth in Yorkshire and failing to address the north-south economic divide.

Doncaster Council is deeply disappointed by the Government's broken promise to deliver major transport infrastructure improvement works in the region. This Council calls on the Government to reinstate its plans for electrification of the Trans Pennine and Midland Mainline routes, and proceed with the full East Coast Main Line crossing programme, by ensuring that funding is put in place to end the current 'pause', and confirming a new timetable for delivery of these important projects.

Failure to do so will negatively impact passengers and businesses, and seriously brings into question this Government's stated commitment to the Northern Powerhouse.

34. TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING MOTION, WRITTEN NOTICE OF WHICH HAS BEEN GIVEN BY COUNCILLOR PAT KNIGHT AND SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR GEORGE DERX, IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 16.1

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 16.1, a Motion was submitted by Councillor Pat Knight and Seconded by Councillor George Derx:-

"Hatfield Colliery is the last operational mine in South Yorkshire, one of just three in the whole country, and a significant employer in the area with over 400 members of staff. Production has now ceased, probably for the final time.

The early closure of the pit will end up costing the UK more money, not less. Calculations made by the company suggest that the extra investment required to keep the mine open as planned until summer 2016 would have been more than offset by tax and VAT revenues coming back to Government.

This calculation does not take account of the money Government will now pay out in benefits to miners who are not able to find alternative work. Nor does it factor in the impact of early closure on the 100 companies in the supply chain, the local economy, or the social effects on the local community.

The miners at Hatfield were led to believe that they would have another 12 months of work and could plan their futures. However, the Government refused to extend an existing loan arrangement despite the company arranging contracts to sell more than half their coal.

This Council calls on Government to think again, and do all that it can to support the miners of Hatfield Colliery, their families and the communities that it supports."

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

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

For – 40

Against – 0

Abstentions – 6

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

RESOLVED that Hatfield Colliery is the last operational mine in South Yorkshire, one of just three in the whole country, and a significant employer in the area with over 400 members of staff. Production has now ceased, probably for the final time.

The early closure of the pit will end up costing the UK more money, not less. Calculations made by the company suggest that the extra investment required to keep the mine open as planned until summer 2016 would have been more than offset by tax and VAT revenues coming back to Government.

This calculation does not take account of the money Government will now pay out in benefits to miners who are not able to find alternative work. Nor does it factor in the impact of early closure on the 100 companies in the supply chain, the local economy, or the social effects on the local community.

The miners at Hatfield were led to believe that they would have another 12 months of work and could plan their futures. However, the Government refused to extend an existing loan arrangement despite the company arranging contracts to sell more than half their coal.

This Council calls on Government to think again, and do all that it can to support the miners of Hatfield Colliery, their families and the communities that it supports.

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

A. Questions on Notice

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15.2, the Chair accepted the following question from an Elected Member during “Question Time”:-

(a) From Councillor Andy Pickering to the Mayor of Doncaster, Ros Jones:-

Q. “We have concerns regarding the policy of charging in Mexborough's multi-storey car park. Since the charge was passed in to the 2013/14 budget, circumstances have changed; Mexborough no longer has a Town Centre supermarket.

Mexborough has five car parks, three chargeable operated by private companies; the current policy leaves Mexborough with only one free car park at a time when neighbouring Towns have no charging and are having new supermarkets constructed. Mexborough has benefited from a 500k investment to assist regeneration. Would Mayor Jones be prepared to re-examine the issue of charging in order to give that investment the best chance of success?"

A. The Mayor gave the following response:-

"I'd like to thank Councillor Pickering for his question.

My Cabinet and I are absolutely committed to the regeneration and economic success of Mexborough. Ensuring that Mexborough is able to thrive is vital to both local residents and the economy of our Borough as a whole. That is why we have taken action to make improvements in the Town, with over half a million pounds invested in the regeneration of Mexborough Market and upgrades to the High Street.

However, I certainly recognise your concerns. We are in difficult economic and financial circumstances, something that has been seen on Mexborough High Street with the closure of shops such as Tesco. That is why I put a hold on the introduction of the parking charges that were agreed by Council in the budget. I am determined not to undermine the work we are doing to boost the Town.

I am confident that our regeneration project will bear fruit. It is already giving a new lease of life to the Market and I am hopeful it will also help to generate new interest in empty shop units, both in the Market Square and on the High Street.

We have already made some improvements to the multi-storey car park and we will be completing those works later this year, when the lift is brought back into use.

All Councillors in this Chamber will be aware that between 2010 and 2015, the Government grant to Doncaster Council was cut from £270m per year to £148m per year. The Conservative Government has made clear it intends to continue with these draconian cuts and this will hit services in Doncaster. For this reason, I cannot make an indefinite commitment not to introduce parking charges in Mexborough. To do so would mean making further cuts to other Council budgets which are also under massive pressure and impacting other communities in the Borough.

However, the car park will remain free whilst work is being undertaken and we allow the High Street to benefit from the Market regeneration project. We will keep the situation under close review and I will not undermine the opportunities that are being created through our recent investment in the Town.”

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15.7, Councillor Andy Pickering asked the Mayor the following supplementary question:-

- Q. “I would like to thank the Mayor for her response to my question, and will say we understand the Council's position in these challenging times.

However, your reply states ‘you are determined not to undermine the work we are doing to boost the Town’. We share this determination and are equally committed to the regeneration of our Town, but we remain convinced that car parking charges will adversely affect our shared vision of the regeneration project bearing fruit.

As to the budgeting implications suggested, we remain unconvinced that this change will achieve the anticipated contribution, particularly in view of the loss of Tesco, our only Town Centre supermarket. Can the Mayor confirm that a revised income forecast from this charge has been completed following the departure of our last Town Centre supermarket, and can she confirm that the forecast has been completed and if so, is she confident that the revised forecast will achieve the required budgetary commitment?”

- A. The Mayor gave the following response:-

“We can’t do anything until a forecast has been undertaken, but this cannot be carried out until we can ascertain whether we can introduce a parking charge. This must be dependent upon what retail stores come forward and then we will have to look again if we need to revise the estimate. We will continue to maintain and review the situation to obtain the best option and to regenerate Mexborough. This has been instigated by the Labour Group and by myself as Mayor.”

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 R. Allan Jones asked the Mayor of Doncaster, Ros Jones:-

“I want to raise two points. In relation to my first point, throughout the papers here before Members today, we do not see any reference to the actual dates of when the reports were composed or revised as part of the process. I would like the Executive to look at this so that in future when I pick up a report, I will have reference to when the report was actually written, in order that I can see what changes have been made. An example of this was at an Overview and Scrutiny meeting. I received a report and I had to inform the Chair that the report had already been considered by Cabinet. However, there was no reference of this in the report. I have brought these issues to the attention of the Audit Committee at the last meeting.

In relation to my second point, as being a volunteer in my Library and also as a Library user, I understand that the Council has a policy in place where the screens switch off after 2 minutes use, which is causing a lot of concern in my Library and in the Ward that I serve. I am asking if this can be changed. Can you look into this please?”

A. The Mayor gave the following response:-

“All reports coming to Council and considered at this meeting this evening have been put on the Forward Plan, including any items that are to be considered by Cabinet. All reports that are to be considered by Full Council have a date on them. I ask that if you can put the issues you wish to raise in writing, I’m sure Officers will look at them.

In relation to your second question regarding screens in Libraries, I am assuming that you are talking about ‘computer’ screens. I think you should have directed your question through to ICT. But, if you feel that the policy needs amending, I have no problem with this. You will need to speak to ICT. I am not sure if this practice is common across the Borough.”

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

“This morning, I was notified of a tender on the Council’s website in respect of a tender for a consultant to carry out a review of areas of Green Belt in the Borough. The LDF Core Strategy was identified as no significant changes to Green Belt to meet growth targets.

Whilst looking at the desk top based tender documents this morning, the review was not just looking at Doncaster, but also Bawtry, Tickhill, Edlington, Toll Bar and other areas.

What is the Mayor doing to protect Green Belt in the Borough and in particular, the East of Doncaster, which has been unprotected over recent years?"

A. "You need to have a look at the Council's Local Plan and input into that. We need to have a Local Plan to see what the whole Borough wants. Green Belt is what it is. I don't look at every tender. I suggest that if there is anything specific that you have any issues with, please write to me and I will get someone to respond to you in writing."

Q. Councillor John Cooke asked the Mayor of Doncaster, Ros Jones:-

"In relation to the St. Leger Homes improvement programme, can you clarify whether the Government has withdrawn funding. If this is the case, who bears the responsibility if the improvements are not completed?"

A. The Mayor gave the following response:-

"The Government has just announced that housing is going to receive 1% less funding per year. St. Leger homes will be working through their business plan. We will receive £16.7m less in income and therefore, the Capital Programme will slip. Decency Works will be completed this year. Slippage with the Capital Programme will happen every year, but we will continue to review the situation."

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

"Regarding the Green Belt, you heard a statement from Councillor Hart regarding the Green Belt. I support the Greenbelt in its current form. Do you Mayor support the Green Belt in its current form?"

A. The Mayor gave the following response:-

"We need to see what the Local Plan produces for this Borough before any decisions are made. The actual amount of Green Belt needs to be determined. I have always been a supporter of Green Belt, but we need a longer term view."

Q. Councillor Chris McGuinness asked the Mayor of Doncaster, Ros Jones:-

“Changes to the Green Belt have been brought about by Central Government. The legislation and the guidance from the Government changes month by month. Can I ask the Mayor if she thinks that the Government is in favour of the Green Belt?”

A. The Mayor gave the following response:-

“You can see what’s in the Government’s mind. We have seen that the Government has used Green Belt land for building on. We need to preserve as much Green Belt in the Borough as we can. As far as Planning is concerned, I can’t get involved with individual aspects however, I can get involved in Planning Policy.”

B. Questions to the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Glyn Jones, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Equalities

Q. Councillor Cynthia Ransome asked the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Glyn Jones:-

“Seven Residential Homes were destined to close in November, 2013. The reason given for this was that they are too expensive to run. Through ‘bed blocking’ there is a loss in Council revenue. Cabinet decided to close the Homes in June 2014. When is privatisation going to happen and to what cost to Doncaster?”

A. The Deputy Mayor gave the following response:-

“We are currently working towards this. We never said that Residential Homes would close. The Council will be signing over the Homes to Runwood on 1st September. There will be no extra costs associated with the running of the Homes. Runwood would run with the Council’s existing client base.”

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

Q. “How can there be no cost to the Council when they have got seven businesses. Are we paying them a fund for the work that should have been done?”

A. The Deputy Mayor gave the following response:-

“A review will be undertaken in relation to the people transferring to those Homes. If an individual is receiving Residential Care and is sponsored by the Authority, the funding will come from the Council’s budget.”

C. Questions to Councillor Joe Blackham, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transportation

Q. Councillor Jonathan Wood asked Councillor Blackham:-

“My question relates to the disruption on the North Bridge. As you come over the bridge coming into the Town Centre, northbound on to St. Marys Bridge, whilst the traffic on the chicane is flowing, the left hand lane is always backed up with traffic all the way up to York Road, which is because the traffic light is still set up as a regular light. Drivers are being forced to take the left hand lane preventing them from filtering into the right hand lane and therefore, no traffic is going under the underpass. Can it be suspended or be pedestrian friendly. To have a filter lane in place all the time might alleviate the problem?”

A. Councillor Blackham gave the following response:-

“I will ask the Council’s Highways Officers to look into the issue you have raised.”

D. Questions to Councillor Tony Corden, Cabinet Member for Customer, Corporate and Trading Services

No questions were put to Councillor Tony Corden, Cabinet Member for Customer, Corporate and Trading Services.

E. Questions to Councillor Nuala Fennelly, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools

Q. Councillor James Hart asked Councillor Nuala Fennelly:-

“The NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) scorecard published this week shows some good progress made across the Local Authority, in particular our growing knowledge of what 16 to 18 year olds are doing; up 7.1%. But, it also highlights areas in which Doncaster is still weak, such as our higher than average 18 year old NEETs; now at 8.7%, and the percentage of 19 year olds achieving a level 3 qualification which is nearly 10% under the average for England. What forward plans do we have in place to address these two failing areas?”

A. Councillor Nuala Fennelly gave the following response:-

“The reason we struggle with 18 year old NEETs is because when they leave school and go to college, there is a delay in receiving the information. There will be a plan regarding how all NEETs come together now that the Team have moved out of Education into the Regeneration Directorate. Regeneration will be putting together a plan to deal with this issue. I will ask an Officer to put a statement together, in terms of where we are with the Plan.”

F. Questions to Councillor Sandra Holland, Cabinet Member for Housing and the Environment

In the absence of Councillor Sandra Holland, Cabinet Member for Housing and the Environment, the Chair of Council informed Members that any questions for Councillor Holland 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 Public Health and Wellbeing

No questions were put to Councillor Pat Knight, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing.

H. Questions to Councillor Chris McGuinness, Cabinet Member for Communities and the Voluntary Sector

Q. Councillor Cynthia Ransome asked Councillor Chris McGuinness:-

“In the 2014/15 Municipal Year, there were over 1,100 Fixed Penalty Notices issued for littering which resulted in an income of £55,000 in fines, but in 2010/11, there were 3,400 Fixed Penalty Notices; one case alone resulted in a fine of £250,000. Do you visualise any improvements in the service on continuing to deliver at this rate?”

A. Councillor Chris McGuinness gave the following response:-

“In the past, Fixed Penalty Notices were picked up quickly by the Neighbourhood Teams. Now the Neighbourhood Teams have fewer staff. The item we are about to look at by the Super Enforcement Structure, is to bring in an outside company to enhance the process. It’s a question of resources.”

I. Questions to Councillor Bill Mordue, Cabinet Member for Business, Skills, Tourism and Culture

No questions were put to Councillor Bill Mordue, Cabinet Member for Business, Skills, Tourism and Culture.

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

In the absence of Councillor John Mounsey, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, no questions were put to the Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, Councillor Jane Nightingale.

36. 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 March and 29th June, 2015.
- B. Sheffield City Region Combined Authority held on 16th February, 30th March and 15th May, 2015.
- C. South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority held on 16th February, 29th June (Annual) and 29th June (Ordinary) 2015, and Section 41 Briefing Notes for March, April, June and July 2015.
- D. South Yorkshire Pensions Authority held on 19th March, 11th June (Annual) and 11th June (Ordinary) 2015.