

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING

24TH SEPTEMBER, 2015

A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL was held at the CIVIC OFFICE, WATERDALE, DONCASTER, on THURSDAY, 24TH SEPTEMBER, 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, Phil Cole, John Cooke, Tony Corden, Jane Cox, Steve Cox, Linda Curran, George Derx, Susan Durant, Neil Gethin, Sean Gibbons, James Hart, John Healy, Rachel Hodson, Charlie Hogarth, Sandra Holland, Mark Houlbrook, Alan Jones, R. Allan Jones, Ken Keegan, Majid Khan, Jane Kidd, Pat Knight, Sue Knowles, John McHale, John Mounsey, Jane Nightingale, Andy Pickering, Cynthia Ransome, Kevin Rodgers, Craig Sahman, Dave Shaw, Alan Smith, Clive Stone, Austen White, Sue Wilkinson and Jonathan Wood.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from the Councillors Bev Chapman, Jessie Credland, Nuala Fennelly, Pat Haith, Eva Hughes, Ted Kitchen, Chris McGuinness, Sue McGuinness, Bill Mordue and Tony Revill.

37. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made at the meeting.

38. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 30TH JULY, 2015

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 30th July, 2015, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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

No announcements were made at the meeting.

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

- A. Question from Mr. D. Wright, 15 Chantry Close, Cantley, Doncaster, DN4 6RX, to the Mayor of Doncaster, Ros Jones:-

“Doncaster Council's Constitution allows for 'Question Time' sessions for public questions at Council meetings.

Will the Mayor agree to change the Constitution to also allow 'Motions to Doncaster Council' sessions at Doncaster Council meetings? The procedures could be similar to the 'Question Time' sessions.

This will enable Doncaster residents to bring forward positive suggestions directly to the Mayor in front of Doncaster Councillors and to members of the public both in the Council Chamber and by the new audio visual recordings at home.”

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

“Thank you for your question Mr. Wright.

I should make clear from the start that any decision on whether to allow members of the public to submit Motions to Full Council meetings is not within my power as Mayor. Changes to the Council's Constitution rest with Full Council and are not within my remit.

I am certainly committed to open and transparent Local Government where members of the public are able to engage with their representatives. I am sure that my colleagues in the Chamber today feel the same.

There are of course numerous ways in which members of the public can currently raise issues in a public forum. Regular meetings of Full Council are held where members of the public can submit a question to the Mayor, any Cabinet Member or the Chair of a Regulatory Committee, in the way that you have done today. There are also opportunities to ask a question of myself and my Cabinet at our fortnightly Cabinet meetings.

In addition to these formal meetings, there are also a wide range of other opportunities for members of the public to ask questions or raise issues with me, either by arranging a one-to-one meeting at one of my monthly Meet the Mayor events, by email or in writing.

In addition, Overview and Scrutiny will accept representations from local residents. There is also provision in the Constitution that requires Council to consider and debate Petitions submitted by the public, should they receive sufficient levels of support.

I believe that the current arrangements are wide ranging and work well. I am happy to receive communications from the residents of Doncaster and help out whenever I can, and I know Ward Councillors are too.

My personal view, particularly given the existing wide ranging opportunities for public engagement, is that submitting Council Motions is a function that should remain the responsibility of elected representatives.

Members of the public can of course approach their Local Ward Members or indeed any Councillor, and ask them to consider putting forward a Motion to Full Council. I think that this would be the right approach to take. Once again, thank you for your suggestion.”

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

“This is an unsatisfactory arrangement. I have only been given the response to my question 10 minutes ago. The Council has had my question for 9 days so why can't the response be provided sooner, such as by email. It is frustrating as there have only been 5 questions from members of the public this year. The whole system puts people off asking questions.

I don't see why I have to go to my Ward Member to ask them to put forward a Motion to Full Council as there is no way that anyone will agree to do so. If you attend Cabinet meetings, you are not allowed to put forward a supplementary question, so there is no way forward. Democracy is poor in Doncaster?”

In response, the Mayor stated that:-

“I reiterate Mr. Wright, any decision whether to allow members of the public to submit Motions to Full Council meetings is not within my remit. However, I will ensure that the Elections and Democratic Structures Committee is made aware of the issue in case it wishes to consider the matter further.”

41. STATUTORY YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2015/16

The Council considered a report, presented by the Mayor of Doncaster, Ros Jones, which sought Members approval of a new statutory, strategic Youth Offending Service Plan (YOSP) for 2015-2016 for the Youth Offending Service (YOS).

It was reported that this was the first year that the YOS had presented the Youth Justice Plan (YJP) as part of the new Doncaster Children's Services Trust. Since the plan had started its progress through the approval process within the Council, it had undergone one of the first full joint inspections by representatives from all the National Inspection units. The service was now better equipped to work with young people who entered the criminal justice system.

Members noted that Doncaster YOS now concentrated on managing the behaviour of young people who had entered the criminal justice system. Youth Justice had undergone many changes in the last few years and continued to do so. The inspection highlighted that Doncaster's work with Wetherby, particularly around accommodation and Employment, Training and Education, (ETE) was very good and well advanced. Doncaster was now part of the West and South Yorkshire Consortium which aimed to improve the custodial transitions for young people. The final Inspection report had not yet been received, but initial feedback had shown that there were some areas of weakness and development, particularly around the YOS Management Board and the strategic direction and support it gave. However, the Mayor was pleased to report that the service had shown itself to have staff who worked hard for the young people of Doncaster and provided good support and management.

It was also reported that the YJP identified areas which could be strengthened to provide a better service which included a better use of volunteers, work to further improve the safeguarding of young people and work to reduce the custodial rates in Doncaster for young people between 10 and 18 years old. Doncaster had performed well during the previous year; reducing the number of young people going to custody from 43 (2013/14) to 19 (2014/15) and that the indications so far this year showed that this number was now stable and was around national average.

The YOS was fully incorporated into Doncaster's Children's Trust. The Head of Service now reported directly to the Chief Operating Officer and plans were in hand to further develop the responsibilities of the role, introducing a new Prevention Team. This meant that the emphasis on delivery was now stronger in the area of risk and vulnerability management, and safeguarding of young people.

The report highlighted the areas where the YOS would face its biggest challenges. It outlined that even though the YOS budget had been slightly reduced from the last financial year, it was expected that further reductions were possible which would increase the difficulty faced by YOS to continue to meet the challenges around remand costs and young people sent to custody alongside additional non-core services not related to national indicators. Doncaster's performance against national indicators compared well with regional and national figures. The ETE figures had risen well during the year and the team had been highlighted as an area of good practice in the recent inspection. The YOS had a really strong 100% outturn for the provision of accommodation and the Doncaster re-offending rate remained below the national average for the fifth consecutive year.

The YOS continued to work closely with all its partners to ensure that public confidence continued to increase and young offenders were being effectively helped and managed. This had been enhanced by the work being undertaken with those young people subject to Police cautions and conditional cautions.

In conclusion, the Mayor stated that the YOS in Doncaster provided a good solid service to the community, and this plan ensured the Council had the tools to develop an even better one. The plan identified a number of areas for improved delivery and that sustainable Action Plans had been developed to address these issues. All these plans were incorporated into a number of Doncaster's Strategic Plans and some of the areas for improvement were already being addressed, and plans were in hand to address the others.

A copy of the Cabinet's Decision Record from its meeting on 8th September, 2015, had been circulated to all Members prior to the meeting.

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

RESOLVED that the Statutory Youth Justice Plan 2015-16, be approved.

42. SHEFFIELD CITY REGION DEVOLUTION DEAL UPDATE

The Council received a report, presented by the Mayor of Doncaster, Ros Jones, which provided an update on the Sheffield City Region (SCR) Devolution Deal submitted to Government.

It was reported on the 21st July, 2015, the Chancellor announced that City Regions that wished to agree a devolution deal in return for a Mayor by the spending review, would need to submit formal, fiscally-neutral proposals and an agreed geography to the Treasury by 4th September, 2015. The SCR submitted its devolution proposal, a copy of which was appended to the report, in response to this deadline. The devolution proposal contained thirty 'asks' across the following six themes:-

- An integrated 21st Century Transport Network;
- A world leading area for innovation, advanced manufacturing and business growth;
- More people learning, earning, in Apprenticeships and higher skilled employment;
- Better use of publicly owned assets;
- A stable, long-term financial settlement that puts SCR in control of its own destiny; and
- Greater accountability of national programmes to the city region

Members noted that the deal represented a significant opportunity to take more control locally for decisions that affected the economy. Negotiations with Government were ongoing, but Doncaster was heavily involved and was driving the agenda for skills and revised governance. Whilst the Mayor and City Region Leaders believed that the current City Region governance structures were appropriate for delivering the devolution deal, the Government was clear that without a City Region Mayor, additional devolved powers and funding would not be possible.

In conclusion, it was noted that negotiations would inform and shape the governance arrangements supporting the deal, and that an announcement was expected as part of the Autumn Statement, set for 25th November, 2015.

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

RESOLVED that

- (1) the Sheffield City Region devolution submission be noted; and
- (2) the involvement of the Chief Executive, Mayor of Doncaster and Senior Officers in the negotiation of devolution “asks” with Government, be noted.

43. APPOINTMENT OF A MEMBER AND VICE-CHAIR TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Council considered a report which sought the appointment for a replacement Member and Vice-Chair to serve on the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee as a consequence of the former Vice-Chair, Councillor Nightingale, being appointed as a Cabinet Member.

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

Subsequently, upon seeking a nomination, Councillor Charlie Hogarth was nominated to serve on the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee as a replacement for Councillor Jane Nightingale.

On being put to the meeting, the Motion to appoint Councillor Charlie Hogarth to serve on the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee for the remaining 2015/16 Municipal Year, was declared CARRIED.

The following nominations were then proposed for the appointment of Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee:-

Nominations

Councillor Charlie Hogarth
Councillor R. Allan Jones

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

For Councillor Charlie Hogarth - 34

For Councillor R. Allan Jones - 11

On being put to the meeting, the Motion to appoint Councillor Charlie Hogarth as Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee for the remaining 2015/16 Municipal Year, was declared CARRIED.

In addition, it was Moved and Seconded that Councillor Charlie Hogarth be removed from the Regeneration and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel and be replaced by Councillor Susan Knowles.

On being put to the meeting, the Motion to appoint Councillor Susan Knowles on the Regeneration and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel, to replace Councillor Charlie Hogarth, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED that

- (1) Councillor Charlie Hogarth be appointed to serve on the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee for the remaining 2015/16 Municipal Year;
- (2) Councillor Charlie Hogarth be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee for the remaining 2015/16 Municipal Year; and
- (3) Councillor Susan Knowles be appointed to the Regeneration and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel, to replace Councillor Charlie Hogarth.

44. AUDIO VISUAL RECORDING OF COUNCIL MEETINGS – UPDATE REPORT
(Minute No. 21 - 22nd May, 2015)

Further to the above Minute, the Council considered a report which provided an update on arrangements for the audio visual recording of future Council meetings.

It was reported that at its meeting on 22nd May, 2015, Council agreed to progress with arrangements for the audio visual recording of Council meetings. Following this meeting, further discussions had taken place with the current provider of the Council's Chamber Voting and Conference system regarding installation of the equipment, and training to meet the Council's requirements. Following consideration being given to the process of publishing the recordings once they had been captured digitally, it appeared that the most cost effective option was to publish the recordings on the Council's Website and upload the recordings onto the Council's YouTube Channel.

The report pointed out that recordings would be published without any editing to reflect a true record of the meeting, but there could be occasions where editing was required; an example of which being if exempt information was inadvertently released.

It was noted that once the equipment had been procured and installed, training would be undertaken by Officers on the use of the equipment and the process for downloading recordings to the YouTube Channel. Liaison would also take place with Political Groups prior to implementation, to enable them to consider issues around conduct and the implications of being filmed.

In conclusion, it was anticipated that the necessary arrangements would be in place for the Council meeting scheduled on 26th November.

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

Councillor Jonathan Wood suggested that Council Procedure Rules be amended to allow public questions to be read out at the meeting rather than being taken as read, which would enable any citizens of Doncaster who wished to view proceedings, to hear the question which had been submitted.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the current position in respect of arrangements for the audio visual recording of Council meetings, be noted; and
- (2) the implementation date of 24th November, 2015, for the audio visual recording of future Council meetings, be noted.

45. TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING MOTION, WRITTEN NOTICE OF WHICH HAS BEEN GIVEN BY COUNCILLOR JAMES HART AND SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR NICK ALLEN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 16.1

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 16.1, a Motion was submitted by Councillor James Hart and Seconded by Councillor Nick Allen:-

“The Highways England Pinch Point Programme was first outlined in the 2011 Autumn Statement with a budget of £200 million and expanded by a further £100 million in the 2012 Autumn Statement. This programme addressed 19 pinch points across Yorkshire and the North East which required improvement to keep traffic flowing through the road network. Most of these projects have been completed successfully. However, the A1(M) in South Yorkshire remains untouched other than minor improvements to Junction 36.

This Council calls upon the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Highways England to include improvements to the A1(M) in South Yorkshire in the 2015 Autumn Statement and this council will give cross-party commitment to lobby for improvements to this vital transport artery at all appropriate opportunities.”

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 James Hart, which was declared as follows:-

For - 46

Against - 0

Abstentions - 0

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

RESOLVED that the Highways England Pinch Point Programme was first outlined in the 2011 Autumn Statement with a budget of £200 million and expanded by a further £100 million in the 2012 Autumn Statement. This programme addressed 19 pinch points across Yorkshire and the North East which required improvement to keep traffic flowing through the road network. Most of these projects have been completed successfully. However, the A1(M) in South Yorkshire remains untouched other than minor improvements to Junction 36.

This Council calls upon the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Highways England to include improvements to the A1(M) in South Yorkshire in the 2015 Autumn Statement and this council will give cross-party commitment to lobby for improvements to this vital transport artery at all appropriate opportunities.

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

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

“In July this year, the Chancellor announced a change to the rent formula which will apply to all social housing rents, including affordable and social rents. This follows a 60 per cent cut in the affordable housing grant implemented during the previous coalition Government.

The Office for Budget Responsibility has suggested that around 14,000 fewer ‘affordable homes’ will be built as a result of the change in the rent regime.

At a time when more affordable housing is required in Doncaster and across the country, this Council believes the Government's action represents a backwards step in achieving the right balance of housing provision needed to support local residents."

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

An amendment to the Motion was Moved by Councillor Phil Cole and Seconded by Councillor Kevin Rodgers, in that the Motion be amended to read as follows:-

"In July this year, the Chancellor announced a change to the rent formula which will apply to all social housing rents, including affordable and social rents. This follows a 60 per cent cut in the affordable housing grant implemented during the previous coalition Government.

The Office for Budget Responsibility has suggested that around 14,000 fewer 'affordable homes' will be built as a result of the change in the rent regime.

At a time when more affordable housing is required in Doncaster and across the country, this Council believes the Government's actions represents a backwards step in achieving the right balance of housing provision needed to support local residents.

This Council therefore calls on the Government to provide additional funding for affordable housing so that new homes can be built to meet local and national demand."

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

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

An amendment to the Substantive Motion was Moved by Councillor John Cooke and Seconded by Councillor Sean Gibbons, in that the penultimate paragraph be amended to read as follows:-

"At a time when more social and affordable housing is required in Doncaster, and across the country, this Council believes the Government's actions represents a backwards step in achieving the right balance of housing provision needed to support local residents."

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

For - 37

Against - 8

Abstain - 0

On being put to the meeting, the amendment to the Substantive Motion proposed by Councillor John Cooke was declared CARRIED.

A vote was then taken on the Substantive Motion proposed by Councillor Jane Nightingale, which was declared as follows:-

For - 37

Against - 8

Abstain - 0

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

RESOLVED that in July this year, the Chancellor announced a change to the rent formula which will apply to all social housing rents, including affordable and social rents. This follows a 60 per cent cut in the affordable housing grant implemented during the previous coalition Government.

The Office for Budget Responsibility has suggested that around 14,000 fewer 'affordable homes' will be built as a result of the change in the rent regime.

At a time when more social and affordable housing is required in Doncaster and across the country, this Council believes the Government's actions represent a backwards step in achieving the right balance of housing provision needed to support local residents.

This Council therefore calls on the Government to provide additional funding for affordable housing so that new homes can be built to meet local and national demand.

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

“We are all told we should not believe what we read in the press. It is therefore disappointing to read in the Free Press of the proposal to build a Sixth Form at Hayfield. Is this true. Having discussed the Sixth Form review with the appropriate Officer, I am still awaiting a copy of the report?”

A. The Mayor gave the following response:-

“Thank you for your question. I have to say that I was surprised and disappointed to learn about the proposals for New College Doncaster to locate next to Hayfield School. The Council was given no advance warning of the announcement and neither New College Doncaster nor Hayfield School, has worked with the Council regarding this proposal.

It is certainly true to say that Sixth Form provision in Doncaster needs to be addressed, as currently the number and range of providers does not offer the best possible opportunities for our young people.

I am not personally in favour of the government’s Free School Policy. However, I understand that this application was approved, and if there is to be a new Sixth Form College in Doncaster, then in my view, it should be done in a way that improves Sixth Form provision in our Borough. I would also welcome significant new investment in our Sixth Form provision and I would hope that the providers work collaboratively in the best interests of young people across Doncaster.

The original business case for New College Doncaster was that it would be based in central Doncaster. Given that the College is aiming to open its doors to 1200 students in September 2017, this would seem to be the most appropriate location. Everyone in this Chamber will recognise that the Finningley and Auckley area is not, by any stretch of the imagination, in central Doncaster.

Locating a sixth form there will not be of benefit to young people in many parts of Doncaster. The Council has offered to work with the College to identify a Town Centre site that is near the main Transport Interchange and therefore, much more easily accessible to all communities in Doncaster.

I understand that parents at Hayfield School were not consulted on the proposals and many will understandably be upset at the lack of engagement with them to date. What is certain is that I firmly and clearly position myself on the side of young people, parents and the improvement of Sixth Form provision in Doncaster.

I am not yet confident that these proposals achieve those aims. We have raised our concerns directly with New College Doncaster, and a meeting has been arranged with senior officers and the College. I will of course keep Members up to date with any developments.”

Q. Councillor Rachel Hodson asked the Mayor of Doncaster, Ros Jones:-

“Will the Mayor agree with me that the Government’s Trade Union Bill is unfair, unnecessary and undemocratic, and instead is purely a political plot by the Tories to undermine the rights of British workers, including those here in Doncaster, by using agency workers to replace those on strike, imposing unattainable thresholds for strike ballots in the public sector, and by removing the means of deducting Trade Union subscriptions from salaries.

And, will the Mayor write to the Secretary of the State to say exactly what she thinks of this assault on worker’s rights and the Trade Unions that represent them. Will she explain why the current legislation including the deduction of subscriptions from source by the Council, is conducive to good working relations between public sector employers and Trade Unions?”

A. The Mayor gave the following response:-

“The Trade Union Bill is clearly an assault on Trade Unions and workers’ rights. The new plans include criminalising picketing and permitting employers to hire strike-breaking agency staff. They go far wider than the original concept that strikes should be unlawful unless 50% of those being asked to strike vote in the ballot.

Now up to 3.8 million public sector workers will also lose the right to have their subscriptions automatically deducted from their pay cheques. Conservative MP Matt Hancock, the Cabinet Office Minister, says this is as a key step in modernising the relationship with Trade Unions and saving on administrative fees. That is nonsense. It is simply an unnecessary attack.

Doncaster Council already processes numerous other payroll deductions and the cost of checking off Trade Union subscriptions is minimal. As far as I am concerned, Doncaster Council will continue to offer the service unless the Government make it illegal.

Contrary to what the Conservative Government would have people believe, Trade Unions are a good thing. They were set up to protect employees and that need is still relevant today. Good employers are not scared of Trade Unions, they value them and work with them.

This Conservative Government should stop attacking Trade Unions and workers' rights. We still have significant issues to deal with as a country. Stopping payroll deductions for union fees is a silly and petty policy. It is not what the Government should be wasting its time on when there are real national and international issues to be grappled with, so yes, I will write to the Secretary of State."

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

"Many in the Chamber today will have been moved by the tragic events and the humanitarian crisis that has arisen as a result of the brutal war in Syria. A disaster that has created 4 million refugees in neighbouring countries and a further 6 million people internally displaced within Syria.

The crisis has placed unprecedented amounts of United Nations refugee camps on the borders of Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan; the largest of which was visited by Councillor Hodson to meet aid workers. People there are fleeing violence, but often ending up at the mercy of people smugglers using overcrowded and unseaworthy ships and boats, with the tragic consequences that follow.

The Government has acted too slowly in response to the crisis and only after significant public pressure and therefore, I welcome the commitment that Doncaster has made that it should play its part supporting people fleeing violence and danger that are almost unimaginable to most of us here today.

Can Mayor Jones please advise the Council on the latest position and update Members on the support that will be provided to help those less fortunate than ourselves?"

A. The Mayor gave the following response:-

“Thank you for your question and I wholeheartedly agree. No one can fail to be moved by the desperate plight of the refugees and we will work with the Government to support the relocation of refugee families. This is an immense international humanitarian crisis that must be addressed.

Doncaster has a long tradition of giving shelter to and supporting people fleeing persecution in their homeland and we have successfully delivered programmes to settle asylum seekers and refugees. We will draw on our considerable experience in this area of work and take steps to ensure that people who settle in Doncaster can do so discreetly and in a way that enables them to prosper and contribute to life in the Borough.

But let me dispel myths put out by some people. The reality is that Doncaster’s share of the burden in terms of supporting refugees in relation to the current crisis is relatively small. It is likely to be less than ten families. I expect the families to be housed in private sector properties. Placement of people will take account of availability of accommodation as well any relevant community issues.

With regard to funding, this is one of the areas we await detail upon from the Government, but it is stated that it will be funded out of the Overseas Aid budget and cover health and school costs. There will also be money to provide housing management/support for up to one year. Again, details are to be confirmed, but I assume it will be based on the financial package in the existing schemes that have been running for several years to take refugees from troubled locations across the world including Syria.

I do believe that the Government could have done more and acted more quickly. The approach to this current initiative will not differ in that refugees are referred by international refugee agencies, who identify legitimate refugees from the camps. These typically include vulnerable groups such as women and children, those with medical needs and survivors of violence and torture. Those who qualify are then considered by immigration officials, who conduct additional screening on security, medical and other grounds.

I know that some people have expressed concern about issues such as homelessness in Doncaster and support for existing residents. I would like to assure everyone that we already have extensive programmes to deal with these issues.

Of course, taking in refugees is not the only answer. The Government must do what it can as part of a wider programme.

Amongst the often negative coverage about migration in some parts of the media, it can be all too easy to forget about the human impact of civil war. I think in many ways the answer is quite simple. Thousands, indeed millions of people face a perilous future. Many have seen family members killed, faced violence and enormous personal loss. Placed in the same situation, I have no doubt that most of us would act on our natural instinct, sweep up our children and try to take them to a place of safety. In doing so, we would hope there were other people that would reach out a hand of friendship.

Despite the issues we face in Doncaster, we are still in a position to offer that support. It will not be a burden on our Borough, we will not be using social housing and I am proud that Doncaster will be able to provide support to people in crisis, during their hour of need.”

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

“I am pleased to read in the papers about the second Enterprise Zone bid. You are of course endorsing Conservative Government policy, but dressing it up as your own as you do with the apprenticeship scheme. My question is, how many jobs do you anticipate that you will bring to the North?”

A. The Mayor gave the following response:-

“I am interested in Doncaster not the whole of the North and the jobs I am bringing are actually coming forward as you actually look at the number of people that are not claiming job seeker allowances.

The number of apprenticeships that I put in my manifesto has actually been exceeded now, which I am delighted about because this is about getting young people into work, and you know what, Enterprise Zones, whilst ever they are there and I can actually create employment for the people of Doncaster, then I will. Whatever the Government provides, I will use to bring jobs to this Borough and to this Town. I hope the Enterprise Zone is successful and I hope you lobby for it because it will help people in the North of Doncaster. Thank you for your question.”

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

Q. Councillor Jonathan Wood asked the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Glyn Jones:-

“I have got the list of responsibilities here in case Councillor Cole is interested; for his benefit, Councillor Jones is the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Equalities and my question directly relates to equalities in terms of the election of the new Labour Party Leader. Interestingly enough, here are the Council endorsements for Mr. Corbyn and the thing is, not a single Member in the Cabinet including the Mayor or the Deputy Mayor, endorsed Mr. Corbyn; it was only 3 Members. I know who they are; they are all in here.

So the question on equalities is, are you going to sign up to Mr Corbyn’s manifesto with regard to unrestricted issues such as immigration of refugees with no limits and are you also going to think about making sure we treat Service people the same, particularly our returning veterans and things of this nature.

At the end of the day, what we have got is a national Leader of the Labour Party who seems very much at odds with the statements you have made in this Chamber in the past. So are you going to support him or not?”

A. The Deputy Mayor gave the following response:-

“The Leader of the Labour Party will be supported as a body because it’s not just one man who is the epitome of the Labour Party. We are all part of the Labour Party; it may not be the case in the Conservative Party, but it is certainly the case in the Labour Party.

As you have touched on migration particularly the elements of Syria, I can expand on what the Mayor has said and I wholly endorse what the Mayor has said. I attended the Migration Yorkshire Strategic Migration Group meeting yesterday in Leeds where the principal agenda item was Syrian refugees. In attendance at Migration Yorkshire were colleagues who represented Doncaster, Leeds, Kirklees, Barnsley, Wakefield, North Yorkshire, the Department of Work and Pensions, G4S, Migrant Help, and there were 3 Home Office Officials. That meeting is chaired by Councillor Olivia Rowley who is the Cabinet Lead Member for Children, Young People and Schools in Wakefield.

In short, there is no further information on refugees and the Home Office response was that there is an ongoing negotiation between the Home Office and the Treasury about funding, and that rests with Ministers. Equally, it was stressed that there was no timescale for a decision. Everyone in that meeting does recognise the urgency that is required. Every Local Authority in the region has been contacted about accepting refugees and each has responded positively, but it all comes down to the details. Every Councillor in the room said that there can be no movements until the detail is available about the programme. That's for the Conservative Government and Ministers to sort that out. I will leave it at that."

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

Q. "I appreciate the Deputy Mayor's response; it goes without saying we all stand behind even Councillor Cole's comments today and Mayor Jones' statement on supporting refugees. My question is not about refugees, it was about your commitment personally for your support for Mr. Corbyn. The bottom line is, you did not sign up to his manifesto. Why not; if you are telling us that you believe so much in what he does?"

A. The Deputy Mayor gave the following response:-

"We all live in a democracy in this country and I am glad to say everybody has the right to determine that democracy for themselves. I don't have to support anybody; I can support who I want and my support was given during the hustings during the election campaign. It's laid down on record who I supported, but I will support the Leader of the Labour Party because as I reiterated earlier, we are a body of people. It's going to be a wave across this country that will frighten many of the opposition."

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

"You are quoted on the intranet and newspaper, and today's minutes, page number 18, regarding the old peoples Residential Homes we never meant to close.

October 2013; TV news, Doncaster Council Care Homes to close. The residents were having their breakfast. This was the first that they had heard that they were to lose their homes.

October 2013; bed blocking in all of Council run Homes, a loss of £1.7 million.

October/November 2013; Steve Williams, an expensive outside consultant who told relatives, it's my job to close Homes, that's what I do'. Chief Executive, the Mayor and Chair of Scrutiny visit Homes and tell residents and relatives they will close.

November 2013; budget, we all vote, all Labour Councillors vote to close Homes to save £1.93 million. Members did nothing.

At what point did you all never meant to close the Homes or was it the 18 months later when an election was looming?"

A. The Deputy Mayor gave the following response:-

"Thank you for the question. I will reiterate what I have said previously and that is, we did consult, we took into account what came out of consultation process and we reached a decision; a decision I have got to say which was acceptable across the Chamber as a whole. If you are going to say we are going to close Homes 'willy-nilly' that's up to you; it certainly was not the case from our side. We did consult, we did listen, we did evaluate and we came up with a solution which was acceptable to everybody."

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

Q. "Why not privatise the Homes 2 years earlier instead of putting all these relatives and everyone, costing all this money, through all this suffering?"

A. The Deputy Mayor gave the following response:-

"Quite simply, we did not have that information to hand. We did not have the consultation process; we needed to go through that consultation process to reach a decision with the evidence that was provided. That's what we did. You may not be happy with it Councillor Ransome, but that's what we did."

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

Q. Councillor Jonathan Wood asked Councillor Joe Blackham:-

"I am addressing this question to Councillor Blackham as Portfolio Holder for Regeneration which involves the Development Section of the Local Authority. Early this week, I received a very worrying email from a constituent of mine who found themselves in a position where it appears that the Council has working within its Department, Consultants; these are employees of the Council who also run consultancy businesses.

It's a detailed planning question, but I don't want to give too much away or go into too much detail.

We have an employee sat at a desk to deliver a Council function and at 5.00 p.m., when they log-off, they are then employed as Agents or are representing themselves as Agents.

My question is simple. This is a complete conflict of interest. Where the Council seemed to be making a decision that was going to lead to one thing and when this Consultant was employed to work as an employee of the Council, the decision has now changed from the 'left hand' to the 'right hand'.

I know you don't have the details, but you can speak to the Monitoring Officer and the Chief Executive who have received this complaint. Is it standard practice at this Authority not just in your Department, but in other Departments throughout the Authority, to have Consultants who are employees of the Council who have access that others do not have. It is disgraceful that we may have a position where an employee can lobby other employees who sit on a desk next to them. Is that where we are at this Authority?"

A. Councillor Joe Blackham gave the following response:-

"Thank you for your question, but I have no knowledge of the issue you have raised. I can assure you that now it has been brought to my attention, there will be an investigation and you will receive the information in relation to this which will be factual. I don't know if there is any substance at all in relation to the suggestion you are making. However, as I have said, I will investigate and ensure that a briefing note is sent to all Councillors and that clarity is given within that briefing note, as to what this Local Authority's policy is in relation to employees of the Authority who are working as Consultants of this Authority. From my personal stand point, it is totally unacceptable."

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

Q. "Thank you for your response and you have already answered my supplementary question which was that it is unacceptable for a Local Politician; a Councillor, to be able to lobby internally due to the internal access we have and I'd hope he would endorse it is not right that employees can sell their access as Consultants or Agents acting for other people?"

Councillor Blackham indicated that he did not wish to respond.

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

Q. Councillor Cynthia Ransome Wood asked Councillor Tony Corden:-

“I am not sure if the issue is within your remit; it’s about the Complaints Procedure. The Complaints Procedure in my own and our constituents experience is ineffectual. They delay, confuse then lose. Do you have any plans to rectify these omissions?”

A. Councillor Tony Corden gave the following response:-

“I am not quite sure what you are talking about. I cannot provide an answer on a specific complaint that you may have, but I can deal with the issue you are raising if you wish to write to me, but as I said, I am not quite sure of what your question is?”

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15.7, Cynthia Ransome Wood asked Councillor Tony Corden the following supplementary question:-

Q. “Overview and Scrutiny have had a recent paper brought to them by Childrens Services regarding the Complaints Procedure. I have my actual complaint as well, but I also have a complaint with our Complaints Procedure. As it’s in your remit, I don’t know if you have had a chance to look at it to identify anything or if you have had anything brought to your attention, but in my opinion, it wants an overhaul?”

A. Councillor Tony Corden gave the following response:-

“No, I have not had the opportunity to look at the issue, but I will do so and will get back to you. I will also take up the issue you have raised regarding the Complaints Procedure?”

Councillor Rachel Hodson indicated that she wished to clarify the issue under discussion and subsequently gave the following response:-

A. “The paper (report) which went to the Children and Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Panel was presented by the Childrens Trust and it was their Complaints Procedure which the whole report related to. Until recently, the Complaints Procedure even for the Social Care side did still remain with Doncaster Council, but it is now wholly with the Childrens Trust and it would be up to the Trust to alter the Complaints Procedure and would not be affected by the Council.”

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

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

F. Questions to Councillor Pat Knight, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing

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

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

In the absence of Councillor Chris McGuinness, Cabinet Member for Communities, Voluntary Sector and the Environment, the Chair of Council informed Members that any questions for Councillor McGuinness should be submitted in writing to the Executive Office after this meeting and that the Cabinet Member would respond accordingly.

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

In the absence of Councillor Bill Mordue, Cabinet Member for Business, Skills, Tourism and Culture, 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.

I. Questions to Councillor Jane Nightingale, Cabinet Member for Housing

No questions were put to Councillor Jane Nightingale, Cabinet Member for Housing.

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

Q. Councillor James Hart asked Councillor John Mounsey:-

“I was just doing some forward planning in my diary. I was looking at the Overview and Scrutiny work programme for the Panels and it came to my attention that the Regeneration and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel does not have any defined dates for its meetings which makes it really difficult for Members to come in and sit down, and plan to come in to see what that Panel is doing. Can you update us on the position please?”

- A. Councillor John Mounsey gave the following response:-

“Thank you Councillor Hart for your question. I do believe the right person to answer your question is the Chair of that Panel, Councillor Craig Sahman. Craig, the floor is yours.”

- A. Councillor Craig Sahman gave the following response:-

“Thanks John, I have just sat down with Officers today to discuss dates. The problem is with the work plan we have got this year. As there are a lot of different people from outside bodies, we are trying to amalgamate all dates, but the dates will be circulated to Members either by the end of this week or early next week. Meetings will be held in October, November, December and January in relation to the work plan of the Panel. I hope that helps.”

48. MINUTES OF THE JOINT AUTHORITIES

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

- A. Sheffield City Region Combined Authority held on 22nd June and 3rd August, 2015.
- B. South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority held on 27th July, 2015 and Section 41 Briefing Notes for August and September, 2015.