

Public Document Pack



PLEASE NOTE THAT PRAYERS WILL BE HELD AT 6.50PM BEFORE THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL.

THE MAYOR REQUESTS THAT ANY MEMBER WISHING TO PARTICIPATE IN PRAYERS BE IN ATTENDANCE BY NO LATER THAN 6.45PM.

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

Dear Sir/Madam,

You are summoned to attend the meeting of the Borough Council of Newcastle-under-Lyme to be held in the **Astley Room - Castle House** on **Wednesday, 21st November, 2018** at **7.00 pm**.

BUSINESS

11A REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEES (Pages 5 - 6)

Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny committee

12A REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE REGULATORY COMMITTEES (Pages 7 - 8)

Chair's Report Audit and Standards Committee.

14A QUESTIONS TO THE MAYOR, CABINET MEMBERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS (Pages 9 - 10)

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. T. Radwell'.

Acting Chief Executive / Head of Paid Service

NOTICE FOR COUNCILLORS

1. Fire/Bomb Alerts

In the event of the fire alarm sounding, leave the building immediately, following the fire exit signs..

Fire exits are to be found at the side of the room leading into Queens Gardens.

On exiting the building Members, Officers and the Public must assemble at the statue of Queen Victoria. DO NOT re-enter the building until advised to by the Controlling Officer.

2. Attendance Record

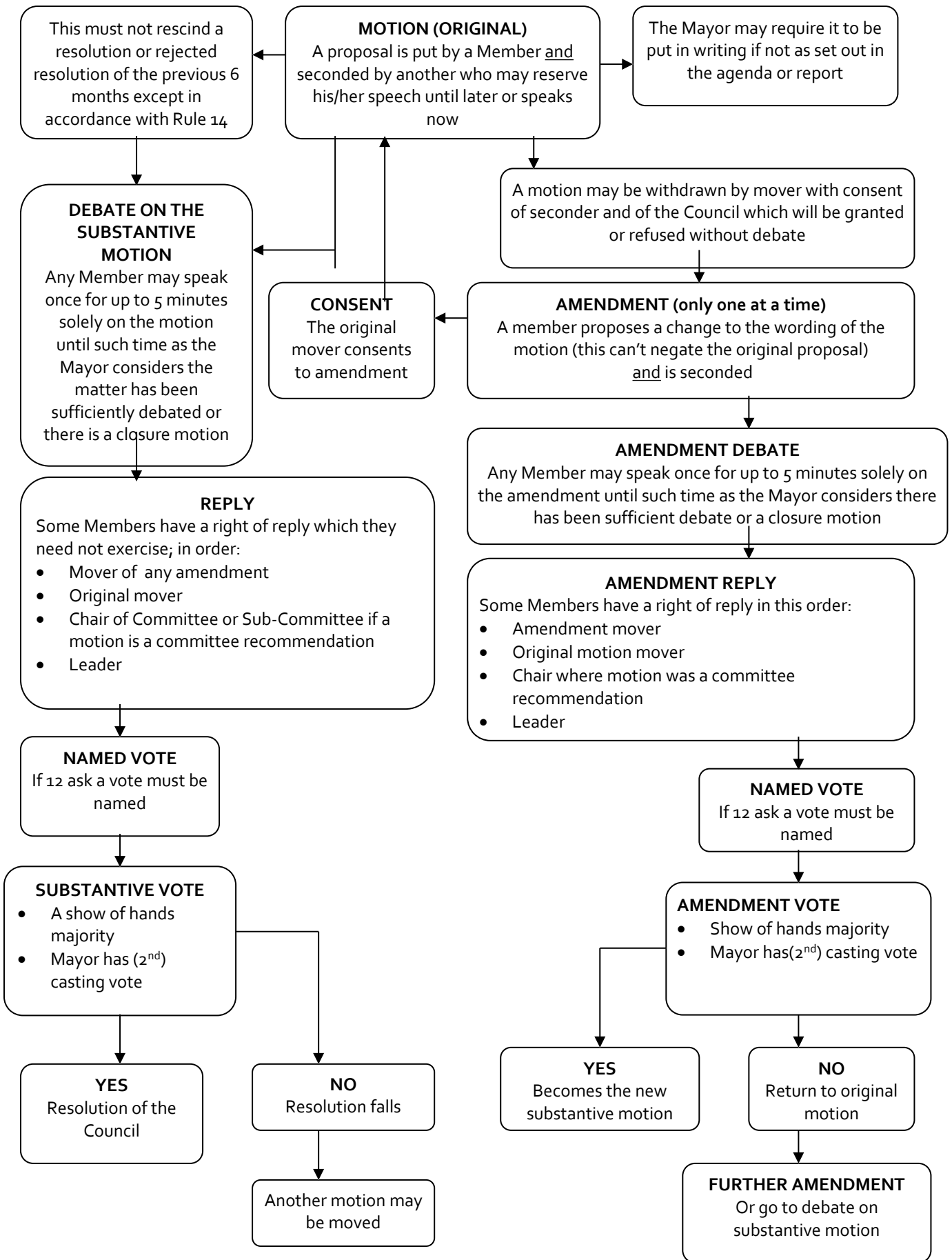
Please sign the Attendance Record sheet on entering the building. This will be located at the reception desk.

3. Mobile Phones

Please switch off all mobile phones before entering the Council Chamber.

4. Notice of Motion

A Notice of Motion other than those listed in Standing Order 19 must reach the Chief Executive ten clear days before the relevant Meeting of the Council. Further information on Notices of Motion can be found in Section 5, Standing Order 20 of the Constitution of the Council.



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Classification: NULBC UNCLASSIFIED

Report to Full Council regarding Finance, Assets & Performance Scrutiny Committee

Date and Time of Meeting: 20th September 2018, 19:00

After dealing with the Apologies of Three Members, confirming no Declarations of Interest and Resolving the Previous Minutes the Committee reviewed the following matters;

1, Medium Term Financial Strategy 2018 / 19 Update

The Executive Director (Resources and Support Services) presented the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and gave members of the Committee opportunity to scrutinise the report prior to consideration by Cabinet on 17 October.

Whilst early in the production of the MTFS for the forthcoming Financial Period, several questions from the Committee were raised including;

- Questioning why no possible effects of Brexit had been modelled in the MTFS
- Questioning the reduction of Employee Budgets and the possible effects on the Workforce
- Questioning the lower returns forecast from the Commercial Portfolio
- Did the Housing options reflect the preferred Local Plan outturn
- What recognition was contained within the MTFS regarding the Ryecroft Development and the issues therein

2, Modern Slavery Update Report

The report on Modern Slavery was introduced by the Partnerships Manager who outlined Section 54 of the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement 2018/19 that required organisations above a certain size, which supplied goods or services, to prepare and publish an annual Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement.

As Chairman of the Committee, I was very disappointed with the disconnect between what was brought to the Committee and the Modern Slavery Charter that was passed by the previous Full Council.

Members raised a number of questions in relation to the practical application and enforcement of the Statement and or Charter, some of which, were addressed by the Partnerships Manager.

- How would the Council determine if a Supplier was in contravention of our Policy and how would that be monitored
- Has the Policy been changed / updated to include the Charter passed by the Full Council previously
- How is the Policy / Charter being passed on to staff etc. Whilst it is right that safeguarding is being placed at the heart of this Policy, there is a danger that the Procurement side is being forgotten.

As Chairman, I was pleased that the comments of the Members would be taken into account when the Statement is revised and I would hope that the Statement returns to the Committee before it is brought before Full Council in the future.

3, Work Programme

The Scrutiny Officer confirmed that the Treasury Management Strategy 2019/20, Revenue and Capital Budgets 2019/20 – Progress/Update and Scale of Fees and Charges 2019/20 would be presented to the December Meeting.

I also proposed a joint meeting with members of the Health, Wellbeing and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee concerning the Guild Hall and it was agreed that arrangements would be made for this to be held in January 2019.

Meeting closed at 20:05

Cllr Mike Stubbs
Chairman
Finance, Assets & Performance Scrutiny Committee

Audit and Standards Committee

The committee has met twice since the last full council meeting, on 24th September and 12th November 2018.

During the course of the two meetings the business dealt with was as follows:

Consideration was given to the Local Government Ombudsman Review Letter 2017/18 which informs Members of any complaints made to the ombudsman in relation to the Council's performance. It was noted that any potential financial redress would be made from the planning department's budget.

Members reviewed the Council's Corporate Risk Management reports for the first and second quarters of 2018/19. It was noted that there were no overdue risks but a greater level of detail was requested for the later of the two reports (which was provided). It was felt that this would not be necessary for subsequent meetings and following discussion members requested that only overdue risks should be reported on in future.

Members received the Annual Audit letter and were advised by Phil Jones (Grant Thornton) that the Auditors were generally pleased with how the audit had progressed and the quality of the record keeping and the value for money the Council offers. The only item noted was an asset revaluation had been missed and that this would need to be carried out accordingly.

Some concerns were raised in relation to absenteeism as shown in the half-yearly Health and Safety report, where there has been a significant increase in days lost, due to accidents. Members were assured that this related, primarily, to a small number of long term absences but this will be monitored to ensure that it is a spike rather than a trend.

At the later meeting, the Interim Executive Director – Resources and Support Services, Jan Willis, presented the Treasury Management Half Yearly report and advised that matters were largely going to plan and that although cash receipts had been below expectations at the start of the year, rates of return had been better than anticipated, so the returns for the year ought to be in line with budget expectations.

The Internal Audit Progress reports for the two quarters show that despite the staffing issues experienced, the progress of the Internal Audit team was on target and that measures are in progress to address the supervisory requirements of the department.

Next Meeting 11th February 2019.

Paul Waring (Chair)

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QUESTIONS TO THE MAYOR, CABINET MEMBERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

To Portfolio Holder for Planning and Growth:

1. Given that the timetable for the Joint Local Plan is delayed until Autumn 2019 please can the Portfolio Holder confirm that background work will still be carried out in the meantime to enable a robust submission from Newcastle Borough Council when the time comes?

Cllr Helena Maxfield
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To the Leader of the Council:

2. Can the Leader of the Council provide an update on his work with the Business Improvement District (BID) over the past year as the Council's representative on the BID board.

Cllr Andy Fear
.....

To the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Efficiency:

3. When was the decision made to withdraw the contract from the borough's churches for servicing/maintenance?

Who made the decision?

How were councillors involved?

How many churches are affected?

How were the churches notified?

Cllr Amelia Rout
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To the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Efficiency:

4. "In response to a question I asked previously at full council about the potential costs of demolishing the Civic Centre (if this becomes necessary), members received the following written response:

The Council is in the process of commissioning specialist consultancy support to determine the most appropriate approach and likely cost of demolishing the building.

Can members be given an update on the progress of this commissioning process, the cost of this consultancy support and (if it is available) their advice on the approach, timescale and cost of demolishing the building safely. If the advice, and the likely cost of demolishing the building, is not yet available, when will it be available?"

Cllr Tony Kearon

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To the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing:

(...to be answered by the Leader of the Council)

5. Local authorities have been warned to prepare for up to three months of disruption in the event of a no-deal Brexit. Despite limited information from government many councils up and down the country have produced plans to ensure that they are as well prepared as possible to deal with a no-deal Brexit situation, and are stepping up their work with local businesses. In addition some councils have warned employees that holiday arrangements may have to be suspended for up to eight weeks, including over Easter. Our local communities need reassurance, especially with the current uncertainties over any deal, therefore what plan does the administration have for a no-deal Brexit and when will this be made public?

Cllr Elizabeth Shenton

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To the Leader of the Council:

6. Can the Leader of the Council please explain why the recent appointment of Head of Human Resources was not an internal appointment?

Cllr Kyle Robinson

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To the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing:

7. Will the portfolio holder responsible for homelessness please explain what plans are being put in place to reduce the increasing amount of rough sleepers on our streets this winter?

Cllr Kyle Robinson

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