

COUNCIL

Wednesday, 14th February, 2024
Time of Commencement: 9.30 pm

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Present: Mayor - Councillor Simon White (Chair)

Councillors:	Adcock	Fox-Hewitt	Stubbs
	Barker MBE	Hutchison	Sweeney
	Bettley-Smith	Johnson	J Tagg
	Brockie	D Jones	S Tagg (Leader)
	Brown	Lawley	J Waring
	Bryan	Moss	P Waring
	Crisp	Northcott	Whieldon
	Fear	Panter	G White
	Gorton	Parker	Wilkes
	Grocott	Reece	G Williams
	Heesom	Richards	J Williams
	Holland	Skelding	Wright

Apologies: Councillor(s) Allport, Beeston, Burnett-Faulkner, Dymond, Edginton-Plunkett, S Jones and Lewis

Officers:	Geoff Durham	Civic & Member Support Officer
	Martin Hamilton	Chief Executive
	Simon McEneny	Deputy Chief Executive
	Sarah Wilkes	Service Director - Finance / S151 Officer
	Georgina Evans-Stadward	Service Director - Strategy, People and Performance
	Nesta Barker	Service Director - Regulatory Services
	Anthony Harold	Service Director - Legal & Governance / Monitoring Officer
	Craig Jordan	Service Director - Planning

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest stated.

2. **MINUTES OF A PREVIOUS MEETING**

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 January, 2024 be agreed as a correct record.

3. **MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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The Mayor made one announcement:

The Mayor's Civic Mass would be held on Sunday 25 February, 2024 at the Holy Trinity Catholic Church, commencing at 11am.

For the next two items, Simon McEneny and Anthony Harold left the room

4. APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

The Leader introduced a report regarding the appointment of Simon McEneny as the Interim Head of Paid Service.

Resolved: That, in accordance with s4 of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989, Council confirm the appointment of Simon McEneny (Deputy Chief Executive) as the Council's Interim Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) with effect from 1st April 2024 on an acting up basis for a period of 3 months or until the substantive appointment is in post, whichever is first.

[Watch the debate here](#)

5. APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM RETURNING OFFICER

The Leader introduced a report regarding the appointment of Anthony Harold as the Interim Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer.

Resolved: That, in accordance with the Representation of the People Act 1983, approve the temporary appointment of Anthony Harold (Monitoring Officer) to the posts of Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer as an interim arrangement, with effect from 1st April 2024 pending permanent recruitment to the Chief Executive Officer role.

[Watch the debate here](#)

6. TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION UPDATE

The Leader introduced a report providing an update on the progress made by Capital&Centric on York Place, The Midway car park and the Ryecroft projects which had been agreed by Cabinet on 6 February, 2024.

The Leader made reference to the Members briefing that had taken place where questions were answered. The new car park was currently under construction and York Place was being taken to the next stage. Also, there were plans for the Midway to be repurposed as apartments. Working with partners made the scheme more affordable and would move forward in stages.

Councillor Sweeney stated that the spending on the developments was £2.649m to take it to the planning permission stage. Of that amount, £2,185,678 was Future High Street Fund and £326,338 was from Aspire. The actual Council money was £136,984.

Members felt that this was good progress for the town centre and looked forward to seeing the next steps. Bringing people in to live in the town was welcomed.

Councillor Brockie, referring to Appendix C – item 7, asked for clarification of the arrangements for maintaining the green spaces around the development.

The Leader stated that there was a Planning process with obligations which would determine future maintenance.

Councillor Richards asked about the Midway car park, stating that previously, Members had been informed that the car park was in a poor state of repair and needed to be demolished. However, the suggestion now was that it was fit to live in so why was this now the case?

The Leader stated that £2m had been spent on the car park dealing with concrete issues and Capital&Centric's ideas for the site could be groundbreaking. There was information available including previous Cabinet reports on the Midway.

Councillor Fox-Hewitt had previously asked for the Feasibility Studies and Consultation reports to be shared with Members and asked if this had been done. The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that they had been shared with Councillor Fox-Hewitt.

Councillor Dave Jones stated that there had been some concerns over appropriate scrutiny of the report and had considered a call-in. However, the all-members teams briefing had answered many of those concerns. Councillor Jones stated that he would like to see more of those briefings taking place.

Councillor John Williams felt that members should have been given the opportunity to meet Capital&Centric or attend a site visit to one of their developments.

The Leader stated that a document had been attached to the Cabinet agenda and at the members briefing which outlined Capital& Centric's history and current projects.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the progress made to date by Capital&Centric on the York Place, Midway Car Park and The Ryecroft projects in Newcastle Town Centre, be noted;
 - (ii) That, expenditure of up to £2,649,000 to develop the three schemes to the end of RIBA Stage 3, and the submission of the requisite planning applications, be approved.

[Watch the debate here](#)

7. **REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET STRATEGIES 2024/25**

The Leader introduced the report and moved the recommendations which set out the recommendations of Cabinet for Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2024/25.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 to 2028/29, Capital Strategy for 2024/34, the Treasury Management Strategy for 2024/25, Investment Strategy 2024/25 and the Commercial Strategy for 2024/25 were also recommended for approval.

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Following a debate, a named vote was taken in respect of the proposed budget:

ADCOCK	Y	GROCOTT	ABSTAIN	SKELDING	Y
ALLPORT	ABSENT	HEESOM	Y	STUBBS	N
BARKER	Y	HOLLAND	Y	SWEENEY	Y
BEESTON	ABSENT	HUTCHISON	Y	J TAGG	Y
BETTLEY-SMITH	Y	JOHNSON	Y	S TAGG	Y
BROCKIE	ABSTAIN	D JONES	N	J WARING	Y
BROWN	ABSTAIN	S JONES	ABSENT	P WARING	Y
BRYAN	Y	LAWLEY	ABSENT	WHIELDON	Y
BURNETT-FAULKNER	ABSENT	LEWIS	ABSENT	G WHITE	Y
CRISP	Y	MOSS	ABSTAIN	S WHITE	Y
DYMOND	ABSENT	NORTHCOTT	Y	WILKES	Y
EDGINGTON-PLUNKETT	ABSENT	PANTER	Y	G WILLIAMS	N
FEAR	Y	PARKER	Y	J WILLIAMS	N
FOX-HEWITT	N	REECE	ABSTAIN	WRIGHT	ABSTAIN
GORTON	ABSTAIN	RICHARDS	ABSTAIN		

In Favour (Y) – 23

Against (N) – 5

Abstain – 8

Resolved: That recommendations (a) to (o), as set out in Appendix '1' of the agenda report be approved.

[Watch the debate here](#)

8. PAY POLICY STATEMENT

The Leader introduced a report seeking Council's approval of the Pay Policy Statement for 2024/25.

This was an annual requirement of the Localism Act, 2011 setting out the remuneration of chief officers and the lowest paid employees and the changes in roles and titles of senior officers.

Resolved: That the Pay Policy Statement, as attached at Appendix A to the report, be approved with a view to it being published on the Council's website by 31 March, 2024 .

[Watch the debate here](#)

9. **WAR AND WAR WIDOW(ER)'S PENSION DISREGARD TOP UP**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth introduced a report seeking approval for the continuing disregard of War Pensions and War Widow(er)'s Pension in calculating Housing Benefit entitlement and Council Tax Reduction.

Resolved: That the disregard of War Pensions and War Widow(er)'s pensions, be approved:-

- (a) in full as income above the statutory £10.00 per week disregard in the calculation of Housing Benefit entitlement and
- (b) in full as income in relation to the means tested assessment of Council Tax Reduction Scheme discount.

[Watch the debate here](#)

10. **QUESTIONS TO THE MAYOR, CABINET MEMBERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

Two questions were received:

1) Question from Councillor Gorton to the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment:

“Leaving out a waste bin on the pavement days after a collection has been made is a practice which the Borough Council would want to discourage. Bins left out in this way block pavements with the result that passers by are often obliged to walk in the road. I understand that as a last resort local authorities can issue a fixed penalty if a bin is persistently left on a pavement. The issuing of a fixed penalty must be a last resort which is only applied when persuasion has failed. Can the Portfolio Holder outline the action or actions the Borough Council proposes to take to encourage householders to be good neighbours and not leave their bins out on pavements days after a collection has taken place? “

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment stated that there had been a long standing issue in some areas of the Borough where wheelie bins were left out in the street between collections, thus causing an obstruction. The Councils Mobile Multi Function Team and the Recycling and Waste Team were now working to raise awareness with households and had put together a

three stage process of education, warning and ultimately, a fixed penalty notice.

Education would be in the form of written literature and possibly a verbal or first written warning. The street or repeat offender households could be leafleted. This would explain the range of waste collection and recycling services and also to place their bins on the street at certain times for collection, removing them afterwards.

Stage two would be a warning, which would be a repeat of the education process but also a Notice of Intent of any repeat offence.

Stage three would be a Fixed Penalty Notice of £60. The MMF Team worked on these when it was founded in 2023, reviewing issues such as dog fouling, fly tipping and residents duty of care regarding their waste management. The Fixed Penalty fees and charges would be decided by Cabinet, then reviewed, debated and amended where necessary and endorsed by the Licensing and Public Protection Committee.

At present, education seemed to be working, with no Fixed Penalty Fees having been issued.

Councillor Gorton asked a supplementary question:

“Could the Portfolio Holder give assurance that resources would be available to underpin the action that had been outlined?”

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that resources would be provided.

2) Question from Councillor Brockie to the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth:

“Capital & Centric’s business model based on ‘Driving value through ownership’ has clearly been successful for them, and will hopefully be successful for Newcastle. It is accepted that the projects and their costs and benefits will be put through consultation and scrutiny. With ‘ownership’ comes responsibility - and at the moment we still own these sites. Selling them, and others, off to relieve ourselves of debt may or may not be appropriate in future-proofing ourselves financially. To make these decisions, can we be assured that the progression of the projects will be offered for scrutiny with full disclosure of any changes and modifications which arise in the course of realisation?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth stated that the Capital&Centric proposals had been taken through a special, all members briefing on 5 February and proposals and suggestions for all elements of regeneration of the town centre were taken to every Economy and Place Scrutiny Committee. The paper on the regeneration plans for the town centre had also been discussed this evening at this meeting. Proposals would continue to be put forward for future scrutiny, as had been done throughout the development.

Councillor Brockie asked a supplementary question:

“Was it possible to have a meeting at some stage, where all Councillors could actually get to meet Capital& Centric and share the vision as it was felt that not enough information had been received and it should be approached with caution, if not suspicion”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth stated that Capital&Centric were an excellent company. They were visionary and their ideas for the town centre were superb and he had no qualms about recommending them.

[Watch the debate here](#)

11. RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

No petitions were received.

12. URGENT BUSINESS

Members were informed that Martin Hamilton, the Chief Executive Officer was leaving the Authority.

The Leader, Councillor Dave Jones, Councillor John Williams and Councillor Stephen Sweeney paid tribute to Martin who then responded with thanks.

[Watch the tributes here](#)

13. DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

There were no confidential items.

**Mayor - Councillor Simon White
Chair**

Meeting concluded at 10.53 pm