

COUNCIL

**MEETING HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, SOUTHPORT
ON THURSDAY 23RD APRIL, 2015**

PRESENT: The Mayor (Councillor Cluskey) in the Chair
The Deputy Chair (Councillor M. Fearn) Vice Chair

Councillors Ashton, Ball, David Barton,
Maria Bennett, Bradshaw, Brennan, Brodie -
Browne, Byrom, Carr, Crabtree, Cummins,
Cuthbertson, Dawson, Dodd, Peter Dowd, Dutton,
Fairclough, Lord Fearn, Friel, Gatherer, Grace,
Hands, Hardy, Hartill, Jones, Keith, John Kelly,
John Joseph Kelly, Kermode, Killen, Lappin, Lewis,
Maher, Mahon, McGinnity, S. McGuire, McKinley,
Moncur, Murphy, O'Brien, Page, Papworth, Preece,
Roberts, Robinson, Roche, Shaw, Thompson,
Tweed, Veidman, Weavers, Webster and Welsh

88. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Atkinson, Jo Barton, Veronica Bennett, Booth, Burns, Dams, Mark Dowd, Kerrigan, Owens and Robertson.

89. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of any disclosable pecuniary interest were received.

90. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Council Meeting held on 5 March 2015 be approved as a correct record.

91. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

Councillors Not seeking Re-Election

The Mayor reported that Peter Maguire had resigned as a Councillor on 12 March 2015, after 3 years service on the Council.

The Mayor also reported that this was the last Council meeting before the Council Elections on 7 May 2015 and that the following 5 Councillors would not be seeking re-election:

Councillor Tony Crabtree who had 4 years service on the Council;

Councillor Gill Cuthbertson, who had 8 years service on the Council;

Councillor Mark Dowd, who had 32 years service on the Council;

Councillor Peter Papworth, who had 27 years service on the Council; and

Councillor Diane Roberts, who had 4 years service on the Council.

On behalf of the Council, The Mayor thanked those Members for their dedicated service to the people of Sefton and extended best wishes to them for the future.

The Leader of the Council (Councillor P. Dowd) and Councillors Brennan, Brodie – Browne and Jones paid tribute to the service given by those Members referred to above.

Mayor of Sefton's Charity Ball Update

The Mayor reported that the sum of £7,714 was raised at the Mayoral Charity Ball held on 14 March 2015 and he expressed his thanks and appreciation to all who had contributed or supported in any way to the success of the Ball.

Public Health Qualification

The Mayor reported that to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents, a further 4 Councillors had successfully completed the Royal Society for Public Health: Level 2 Understanding Health Improvement qualification. The Councillors concerned were Nina Killen, Paula Murphy, Michael Roche and Marianne Welsh.

The Mayor indicated that certificates had been presented to the Councillors by Dr Janet Atherton, the Director of Public Health in the Mayor's Parlour prior to this meeting, and that 18 Members had now completed the qualification including himself and he encouraged all Councillors to attend the course if they had the opportunity to do so.

92. MATTERS RAISED BY THE PUBLIC

The Mayor reported that in accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme set out in Chapter 12 of the Constitution, a petition containing 5,465 signatures had been submitted by the 'SOS Transport Sefton' Group.

The Council heard representations from Mrs Joanne Allman of Formby on behalf of the deputation, on the content of the petition which stated:

"We, the undersigned, are calling on you to continue providing free school and college transport for disabled children and young people over 16.

We are concerned that many children and young people with SEND in the borough do not have the necessary skills to access the Travel Training programme that, according to Sefton Council's proposed changes, may replace free post-16 transport, nor are they able to travel to school or college independently. We do not believe it is fair or equitable to expect parents of these children to take responsibility for their transport to and from school or college.

It is ironic, given the Council's expressed interest in promoting independence skills, that the proposed changes will in fact have the opposite effect for many children and young people with SEND, if they have to be escorted to school by their parents rather than travelling by minibus or taxi. We feel it is patently unjust to target cost-saving measures at the most vulnerable in society, and that it is tantamount to discrimination to penalise already hard-pressed families because their children's disabilities prevent them from accessing the support offered by the Council.

Please take account of the views of the people of Sefton in the Public Consultation on Post-16 SEN Transport."

The Leader of the Council (Councillor P.Dowd) thanked Mrs Allman for presenting the petition and indicated that the Council had no intention to cease the provision of post -16 school and college transport for disabled children and young people with special educational needs who attend specialist schools and colleges. The provision of transport may change for young people attending mainstream schools but this would be based on an assessment of the individual needs of each young person.

The Leader also referred to the concerns raised by Mrs Allman about the recent public consultation exercise undertaken by the Council and indicated that the consultation arrangements had been approved by the Council's Public Engagement and Consultation Panel. He extended an invitation to representatives of the 'SOS Transport Sefton' Group to attend a future meeting of the Panel to discuss the lessons to be learnt in improving the process for future consultation exercises. The Leader also expressed a hope that dialogue would continue between the Group and Members and Officers of the Council on the future delivery of the transport service.

During the brief debate, it was also suggested that the Public Engagement and Consultation Panel be requested to review the Council's consultation arrangements and seek feedback from other groups who had expressed dissatisfaction with recent consultation exercises.

RESOLVED:

That:

- (1) the petition be noted;

- (2) the statement and assurances given by the Leader of the Council be noted; and
- (3) representatives of the 'SOS Transport Sefton' Group be invited to attend a future meeting of the Public Engagement and Consultation Panel to discuss the lessons to be learnt in improving the process for future consultation exercises.

93. QUESTIONS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

The Council considered a schedule setting out the written questions submitted by:

- Councillor Brodie-Browne to the Leader of the Council (Councillor P. Dowd)
- Councillor Shaw to the Leader of the Council (Councillor P. Dowd)
- Councillor Preece to the Leader of the Council (Councillor P. Dowd)
- Councillor Dawson to the Leader of the Council (Councillor P. Dowd)
- Councillor Dawson to the Cabinet Member – Corporate Services and Performance (Councillor Tweed)
- Councillor Dawson to the Cabinet Member – Older People and Health (Councillor Cummins)
- Councillor Dawson to the Chair of the Planning Committee (Councillor Veidman)
- Councillor Welsh to the Cabinet Member – Communities and Environment (Councillor Hardy)
- Councillor Preece to the Cabinet Member – Communities and Environment (Councillor Hardy)
- Councillor Hands to the Cabinet Member – Transportation (Councillor Fairclough)
- Councillor Papworth to the Cabinet Member – Regeneration and Tourism (Councillor Maher)

together with the responses given. Supplementary questions were responded to by the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Members for Corporate Services and Performance; Older People and Health; Communities and Environment; Transportation; and Regeneration and Tourism, and the Chair of the Planning Committee.

94. PUBLIC HEALTH ANNUAL REPORT 2014

Further to Minute No. 74 of the Cabinet meeting held on 26 March 2015, the Council considered the annual report of the Director of Public Health for 2014, which provided details of key health issues affecting the Sefton population.

It was moved by Councillor P. Dowd, seconded by Councillor Maher and

RESOLVED:

That:

- (1) the annual report of the Director of Health be received; and
- (2) it be noted that the report would be published.

95. WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

Further to Minute No. 42 of the meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 25 March 2015, the Council considered the report of the Director of Corporate Services on the Confidential Reporting Policy which had now been amended and re-named the 'Whistleblowing Policy'. The report also provided an update on progress in relation to a number of Constitutional amendments.

It was moved by Councillor Roberts, seconded by Councillor P. Dowd and

RESOLVED:

That:

- (1) the Whistleblowing Policy as set in out in Appendix 1 to the report be approved; and
- (2) the amendments to the Constitution as set out in paragraph 1(b) of the report in relation to the Planning Committee, the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Terms of Reference for the Cabinet Member - Older People and Health be approved.

96. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES 2014/15

It was proposed by Councillor P. Dowd that Councillor Kermode be nominated as the Mayor Elect and Councillor Cluskey as the Deputy Chair of the Council for 2015/16 at the Annual Council meeting to be held on 19 May 2015 at Bootle Town Hall.

RESOLVED:

That the nominations be submitted to the Annual Council meeting to be held on 19 June 2015 at Bootle Town.

97. NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR HARDY

It was moved by Councillor Hardy, seconded by Councillor Maher and unanimously

RESOLVED:

That:

1. The Council resolves to write to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs expressing the concern of the Council at both current charges and proposed further water service charges affecting Sefton Council.
2. The Council asks the Secretary of State to note that surface water highway drainage charges applied by United Utilities to local authorities are already charged at the highest rates in England and Wales. Her attention is drawn to United Utilities proposing to phase-in new and further charges for Council premises and open spaces from April 2016 at a time when this Council has sustained prolonged and unprecedented reductions in budget.
3. The Secretary of State is also asked to note the significant difference between what Councils within the United Utilities region are charged and what level of water service charges are applied to local authorities by all other water and sewerage companies in other regions. The following examples are noted:
 - Department for Education Consistent Financial Reporting data shows that in 2012/13, schools in the North West region paid a total of £27 million for water/sewerage, whereas schools in the South East paid £11 million. Both regions roughly have similar numbers of schools and pupils yet an extra £16 million of added charges are applied in our region.
 - United Utilities have indicated intent to phase in added charges to the six Greater Merseyside local authorities of £2,430,000 from April 2016. No other district outside the North West will face such extensive additional charging.
4. The Council calls upon the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to commission an independent review of the differing scale of charges facing public sector services for water and sewerage services, similar in scope to the 2009 Walker Review of household charging and they are asked to revise guidance on concessionary schemes that relate to Section 43 of the Flood & Water Management Act 2010 to make clear that community assets managed by local authorities can be included within a concessionary scheme.

