

**Ward Councillor Report (5th Report)
for the meeting of Nunthorpe Parish Council on 19th March 2024**

1. COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

1.1. Council Meetings.

- Since my previous report to the Parish Council (presented on 16th January 2024), there have been two meetings of Middlesbrough Council - on 17th January and 8th March. (The meeting scheduled for 28th February was cancelled). The pre-occupation of the Executive has been seeking permission from the Government to use Council assets to obtain a loan, so that a balanced **budget** could be created. This authorisation arrived just in time for the budget-setting meeting on 8th March. As the Monitoring Officer refused my request for a series of votes on the main budget components, I felt that non-aligned Councillors were facing an impossible choice. There were parts of the budget proposed by the Executive which I felt unable to support, but I also knew that, without a balanced budget, the Council would effectively be suspended and Government Commissioners would make life in Nunthorpe much worse (with, for example, a Council tax rise of about 10%, and no green waste collections). So I abstained.

1.2. Planning Committee.

- The Planning Committee met on 8th February and 7th March.
- The **Ford Close Development** was considered at the meeting held on 8th February. It was made clear to me before the meeting that, because Nunthorpe Parish Council had submitted written objections to this proposed development, my participation as both a Parish Councillor and a Member of the Committee could result in a costly formal challenge of the outcome. A compromise was reached whereby I could remain on the Committee and ask questions, but not take an active role in discussion. So I did ask several questions, but abstained. The development was approved. (To avoid compromising my position in similar situations, I propose to withdraw from future Parish Council discussions about controversial cases.)
- On 7th March, the Committee once again considered the application for additional class-rooms at **Chandlers Ridge School**. I was genuinely conflicted because I wish to support our local schools, but I am equally conscious of complaints from local residents about daily problems caused by those driving children to school. The case had previously been deferred so that a representative of the school could answer questions about traffic management, but, to the surprise of Members, once again, no one attended. The school management had changed the proposal so that there would be no reduction in on-site car-parking for staff, but I was disappointed not to be provided with any reassurance about how the increased traffic (caused by the additional number of school-children) would be managed. Although I abstained, the majority of Members agreed to approve the proposal.

- On 26th January, Council Officers revealed a third option for installation of equipment at **The Avenue Park**, (as the result of the planning application for “option 1” having been withdrawn until some community consensus emerged.) During February, I consulted those most directly impacted about the proposal, and on 1st March announced that feedback from most respondents was that we should proceed with the “option 3” compromise.

1.3. Overview and Scrutiny Board (OSB).

- The main focus of this Committee has been on forming a comprehensive proposal for consideration by the **Boundary Commission**. In line with the preference of the Parish Council, I attended four meetings of OSB at which I pressed the case for Borrowby Rise and Plantation View to be reallocated as part of the Nunthorpe Ward. This proposal was accepted by the Committee, endorsed by the full Council, and submitted to the Boundary Commission.

2. NUNTHORPE DEVELOPMENTS

2.1. Nunthorpe Community Centre.

- My pre-occupation in recent weeks has been working with Wade Tovey and others to draft an initial, and then a more comprehensive, bid for a local Consortium to manage the Nunthorpe Community Centre. We presented the financial implications at a special meeting of the Parish Council held on 12th March.

2.2. Footpaths.

- I have continued to follow-up widespread concerns about the state of our footpaths, particularly the single pavements on Stokesley Road and Guisborough Road. I have been assured by Council Officers that overgrown hedges will be cut-back as a prelude to resurfacing part of the footpath on Guisborough Road.

2.3. Speeding.

- A “speedwatch” by the Traffic Police, organised by PCSO Ballinger and myself, took place on 9th February near the junction of Guisborough Road and Stokesley Road. I was informed that police records show that Guisborough Road ranks in the top five speeding “hotspots” in Middlesbrough, which was evidenced when a number of fines were imposed for excessive speeding during this exercise. More speedwatch sessions are planned.

2.4. Traffic and related infrastructure issues.

- I have been following-up with various Council Officers the 8 proposals in my detailed report, which were endorsed by the Parish Council in January.

2.5. Area Care

- The budget proposal about which I received more correspondence from Nunthorpe residents than any other issue was the concerns of two-person households that they would have too much residual waste to manage, if they are permitted to have only one small black bin, collected every fortnight. I persuaded Middlesbrough’s Executive to relent from their initial dogmatic prohibition, enabling the purchase of a second bin by grandparents and others whose household often accommodates more occupants than

are known to Council Officers. [The Mayor refers to this as “The backbencher’s amendment.”]

- I have made some progress toward implementation of my compromise proposal (endorsed by the Parish Council in January) to break the deadlock about collection of dog waste from two non-public locations which are often frequented by the public.

2.6. Anti-social Behaviour.

- I attended a meeting of the South Middlesbrough Neighbourhood Action Partnership on 15th February to follow up several concerns which I had raised during the previous meeting, including the need (evidenced during Halloween) for improved communications between the police, the fire service and the community. I once again asked for Nunthorpe not to be overlooked when cctv cameras are allocated, and was reassured after the meeting that a camera at the Southern Cross junction will be reactivated or replaced, (as promised by the previous Mayor during the launch of the Nunthorpe Neighbourhood Watch.)
- I have continued to lobby Council Officers to support residents whose sleep is disturbed by an intolerable level of dog-barking.

3. OTHER ACTIVITIES

3.1. Nunthorpe Community

- I have provided a summary of Parish Council activities for the Spring edition of Greater Nunthorpe News; supported the Easter Fair organised by the Nunthorpe and Marton Knitters at Nunthorpe Methodist Church; and joined with the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Parish Council in holding drop-in “surgeries” on 5th February and 4th March.

3.2. Local Plan / Neighbourhood Plan

- On 22nd January, Theo Furness (Executive Member for Regeneration) had a preliminary discussion with me about the implications for Nunthorpe of the Council’s draft **Local Plan**. My feedback was that most Nunthorpe residents will be more concerned about detailed implementation than about general principles, and urged the speedy resumption of consultation about a Masterplan for Nunthorpe Grange, and clarification about the designation of Muirfield Park. With Parish Council colleagues, we emphasised the need for detailed consultation during the open consultation session with Theo Furness and Officers on 23rd February at Nunthorpe Methodist Church. Our more detailed proposals are also specified in the **Nunthorpe Neighbourhood Plan**, which Wade Tovey and I discussed with Officers on 15th March.

3.2. Frustrations

- I obtained rectification of the concern I raised during a full Council meeting that the Finance Director of Middlesbrough Council was recorded as having personally authorised the sale of Middlesbrough’s assets as a legitimate source of funding for her own salary. I continue to campaign for transparency about how the sale of Middlesbrough’s assets are being spent under the banner of “transformation”.