

ST HELENS BOROUGH COUNCIL

At the Meeting of the St Helens Borough Council held on
13 January 2021

- (Present)** **The Mayor (Councillor McQuade) (Chair)**
Councillors Baines, Banks, Bell, Bond, Bowden, Burns, Clarke,
Cunliffe, Fulham, Gomez-Aspron, Greaves, Groucutt,
Grunewald, Hattersley, J Jackson, P Jackson, Johnson, Jones,
D Long, T Long, Lynch, Maloney MBE, McCauley, McDonnell,
Murphy, Mussell, O’Keefe, Osundeko, Pearl, Pearson,
C Preston, L Preston, Quinn, Reynolds, Sims, Smith, Sweeney,
Tasker, Uddin, Van Der Burg, and Wiseman.
- (Not Present)** **Councillors Charlton, Gill, Haw and Pritchard.**

26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Charlton, Gill, Haw and Pritchard.

27 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

No Declarations of Interest from Members were made.

28 MINUTES

- * **Resolved that the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2020 be approved.**

29 THE MAYOR’S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor congratulated the following on receiving Honours in the New Year’s Honours List:

Linda Clegg OBE, Chair of the St Helens Children’s Improvement Board - for services to children’s services;

Greg Barton MBE, Chair of the UK Clinical Pharmacy Association - for services to Pharmacy, particularly during the Covid-19 Response; and

Teresa Hurst MBE - for political services in St Helens;

He also thanked Fritz Kuhn whose eight year term of office as Mayor of Stuttgart had come to an end. He welcomed Dr Frank Nopper to the role and wish him and Fritz every success in the future.

30 TO HEAR AND RESPOND TO ANY QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 9

The Mayor reported that there were no questions submitted in accordance with this Procedure Rule.

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31 **TO HEAR AND RESPOND TO ANY QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10**

The Mayor reported that there were no questions submitted in accordance with this Procedure Rule.

32 **TO HEAR ANY DEPUTATIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 11**

The Mayor reported that no requests to hear a deputation had been submitted in accordance with this Procedure Rule.

33 **PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2021/2022**

A report was submitted which requested Council to consider the draft Programme of Meetings for 2021/2022.

The draft Programme of Meetings 2021/2022, which was attached to the report at Appendix A, was based on a similar pattern that was approved for 2020/2021 with minor adjustments due to Bank Holidays and school holidays.

* **Resolved that:**

- (1) **the Programme of Meetings 2021/2022 attached to the report at Appendix A be approved; and**
- (2) **delegation be given to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chair of the relevant Committee to make amendments to the Programme of Meetings as and when required.**

34 **RETURNING OFFICER – REVIEW OF ELECTION EXPENSES 2021/22**

A report was submitted which informed Council that the election fees for 2020/2021 were approved by Council in January 2020 with an agreement for annual inflation. The GDP deflator for the period since the last review, indicates that general inflation in the domestic economy for the period is 2.44% The fees of 2021/2022 will therefore be increased by 2.44%.

The proposed scale of election fees for 2021/2022, were attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

* **Resolved that the scale of election fees for 2021/2022 be approved.**

35 **CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES**

A report was submitted which informed Council that the Overview and Scrutiny Commission at its meeting held on 14 December 2020 considered a report which presented proposed changes to the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules and the related Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules. The purpose of the changes, which were supported by the Commission, was to provide more flexibility for the Council in how it deals with Call-In requests to enable the Council to adhere to its duties in relation to access to information when convening scrutiny meetings.

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Following the implementation of Phase 1 of the senior management restructure, it was necessary to reallocate the existing delegations from the former Executive Director of People Services post to the new Executive Director of Integrated Health & Social Care, Director of Place Services and Director of Children & Young People's Services posts in Part 3 of the Constitution.

* **Resolved that:**

- (1) **the proposed changes in relation to Call-In to the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules and the Budget & Policy Framework Procedure Rules be approved; and**
- (2) **the proposed changes to the Council Functions Delegated to Officers in Part 3 of the Constitution to reflect the current structure be approved.**

36 **NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12**

The following Notice of Motion was moved by Councillor Wiseman and seconded by Councillor Groucutt:

This Council notes:

1. On Tuesday 6 October, the TUC received a letter from the Department for Education saying that ministers have decided to end the Union Learning Fund from March 2021.
2. The Union Learning Fund (ULF) was set up in 1998 to support trade unions to widen access to learning and training in workplaces for both union members and non-members. The fund supports workplace projects across England and is coordinated by the TUC.
3. Each year around 200,000 workers are supported into learning or training with union support through the ULF and the TUC. These learners undertake all sorts of job relevant learning and training, including basic literacy and numeracy, ICT skills, apprenticeships and traineeships, vocational training, continuing professional development and many other informal and formal courses.
4. In 2019–20, the ULF was worth £12m. If upheld this decision will effectively end union-brokered skills training, and will undermine key government skills and retraining priorities at a crucial moment for our economy.

This Council understands that:

1. Union learning reaches people that other DfE programmes do not reach.
2. There is an independent evaluation of the Union Learning Fund every two years. It was most recently evaluated by the University of Exeter in 2018. They spoke to 2,459 learners, and found:
 - Over two-thirds (68 per cent) of learners with no previous qualifications got a qualification.
 - 47 per cent of those with entry level or level 1 qualifications got a qualification at a higher level.
 - Four in five (80 per cent) said they had developed skills that they could Transfer to a new job.

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- Two in three (62 per cent) said their new skills made them more effective in their current job.
- One in five (19 per cent) said they had been promoted or given increased responsibility and one in 10 (11 per cent) got a pay rise.

3. The 2018 independent evaluation found that union learning provided excellent value for money:

- For every £1 spent on the Union Learning Fund, there is a return of £12.30: £7.60 to the worker, £4.70 to the employer.
- The Union Learning Fund delivers an estimated net contribution to the economy of more than £1.4bn as a result of a boost to jobs, wages and productivity.
- The return to the exchequer (through reduced spending on welfare benefits and other factors resulting from the boost to jobs and wages) is £3.57 for each £1 spent on the Union Learning Fund.
- The £12m government funding levered in an additional £54m from employers, Unions and training providers in 2019–20.

4. The government has said it will put reskilling workers at the heart of its economic recovery plans after the pandemic. In September 2020, the government announced a new fully funded entitlement to achieve a first level 3 qualification, delivered through the National Skills Fund.

Union learning is ideally placed to support this aspiration, in two ways:

- directly, through delivering relevant level 3 courses to workplace learners, which is already a core function of the Union Learning Fund and was assessed as highly effective by the 2018 independent evaluation
- directly, through enabling those with basic skills to learn and develop, putting them in a position to progress to level 3 skills

5. Successive governments of all parties have valued this role – and have supported the Union Learning Fund. As government funding, it is paid as a contract and is subject to stringent monitoring requirements. Union Learning Fund money can only be spent on the direct costs of getting working people into learning and skills training, and the associated costs of delivering this programme.

6. ULF projects adapted quickly to delivering online learning and training for workers during the pandemic and have actually surpassed the number of outcomes expected by government since the beginning of April.

This council resolves to:

1. Express its public support for the continuation of the Union Learning Fund
2. Ask the Leader to raise this issue with our local MPs and encourage them to call on the government to reverse its decision.

*** Resolved that the Motion be approved.**

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