

## Council budget: mixed news

### Council tax increased; service cuts scrapped

At the budget meeting in February Gateshead's Labour Council voted for another 4.99% increase in Council Tax. They have also decided to spend £26m in reserves, and as a result some of the planned cuts won't go ahead.

Alongside the Focus Team, residents were angry with plans to cut environmental services. Cuts to the graffiti service, the removal of the last dog warden and countryside ranger, amongst others, now won't go ahead and £2m extra spending on Environmental Services has been agreed. 93% of residents agreed that the Council News magazine should be reduced from 4 issues to 2 each year, and this cut will go ahead.

Ian said: "At least this year the Council Tax hike won't be used to increase reserves. The Focus Team had condemned cuts to street cleaning and other services, and it's right that these have been reversed. Perhaps Labour is starting to listen and that's not before time."



Liberal Democrat councillors at the budget meeting in February

### No more help for Leisure Centres

The Lib Dem plan for time to save leisure centres in Gateshead and Birtley was rejected by Labour at the annual Budget meeting. In January the Labour cabinet agreed to spend £700,000 to pause the closure of leisure centres by three months, meaning that the centres will remain open until after May's local elections. The Lib Dems wanted £1.4m to be spent so that the centres could stay open for another year, which would give enough time for a working group of industry experts, campaigners and council staff to make real changes. All 15 Lib Dem councillors voted for their plan but 40 Labour councillors voted this down, and 9 Labour councillors missed the meeting altogether.

Paul said: "Last May, Labour's election leaflets said that Leisure Centres were safe. By October they were planning to close three of them. In January they proposed to close Leisure Centres in Gateshead and Birtley, and now they will only fund them till the summer. The Lib Dems agree with the *Save Gateshead Leisure Centre* campaign that time is needed for a proper plan to be developed, but Labour just won't listen."

The public consultation has been re-opened until 8 May to allow people to comment on the revised closure plans. To comment, scan the QR code or go to:

<https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/article/20262/Have-your-say-on-proposed-changes-to-the-provision-of-Leisure-Services-in-Gateshead>



### The cut they will not make

For the first time in 20 years the Boundary Commission is reviewing Gateshead's Council size and ward boundaries. Following last year's petition, Lib Dems have argued for a smaller Council.

Amanda said: "Lib Dem research has shown that Gateshead has the second highest number of councillors per resident of all urban councils. There is one councillor for roughly 3,000 residents in Gateshead compared to one for every 8,000 in Leeds and one for nearly 4,000 in Newcastle. So why does it take more Labour Councillors to run Gateshead than anywhere else? Reducing the number of councillors will save hundreds of thousand of pounds and make the Council more efficient."

If you would like a copy of the Lib Dems' response to the Boundary Commission, please email Amanda at [cllr.awintcher@gateshead.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.awintcher@gateshead.gov.uk)



Gateshead Civic Centre – do we really need 66 councillors here?



# Local news and action



The Focus Team continues to resolve issues around the ward. Recently we have:

- Reported blocked drains on the Felling bypass and the footpath near Ennerdale
- Had fly-tipping on High Lanes and Salisbury street removed
- Reported potholes on High Heworth Lane, which are set to be repaired
- Held a "street surgery" on Pelaw high street where we met with residents and discussed local issues
- Consulted Council officers about reports of anti-social behaviour near the Stonehills industrial estate
- Amanda attended a public meeting with the Police in Felling. An similar event is planned for May in Bill Quay; we will advertise the details once they are confirmed.



- Requested a "no through road" sign on Low Heworth Lane, which has been installed
- Reported defunct phone boxes including one on Joicey Street which has been removed



## Woodgates Park repairs complete

Over the winter the play equipment at Woodgates Community Park near Stonehills has been replaced. The park is now open again. Amanda said, "I would like to thank council officers and contractors for working hard to complete the work on time in spite of supply issues. I hope that residents will enjoy the new play area."



## Street Lighting

We have received several comments from residents about the street lighting in the area. The council has an online facility for reporting issues with particular street lights, or residents can contact one of the Focus Team with their comments. Please be sure to include details such as the street name or the number of a specific light so that we can ask for an evaluation.

The online form can be found at:

<https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/article/18325/Make-a-street-lighting-request>

(or scan the QR code on the right).



## Paul Diston selected as candidate

Liberal Democrats in Pelaw and Heworth have chosen Paul Diston to be our candidate in this May's local election. Paul has been a local councillor since he was elected in 2019. Ian Patterson said: 'Our local members have chosen Paul because of all the hard work he does in the area. Amanda and I will be doing all we can to help Paul in the election so we can keep a united team speaking up for Pelaw and Heworth on the Council.'



## Have your say:

Please use this space to tell us what you think needs doing in Pelaw and Heworth, or to let us know of any local problem needing attention

- ☐ I want to receive your email newsletter (please state email address below)
- ☐ I want to join the Liberal Democrats. Please send me details
- ☐ I can spare 1 or 2 hours every few months to help deliver 'Focus' newsletters

Name: Mr / Mrs / Miss / Ms .....

Address.....

Phone .....

email .....

**Please return to:**

Ian Patterson  
6 Loveless Gardens  
Wardley NE10 8ER  
(Tel 07523944921)  
cllr.ipatterson@gateshead.gov.uk

or

Paul Diston  
98 Wealcroft  
Leam Lane NE10 8QR  
(Tel 0191 4423219)  
cllr.pdiston@gateshead.gov.uk

or

Amanda Wintcher  
Civic Centre, Regent Street,  
Gateshead, NE8 1HH  
(Tel 07517499093)  
cllr.awintcher@gateshead.gov.uk

Can we keep you updated about our activities including campaigns, events, fundraising and details about how to get involved? Yes please ☐ No thanks ☐ The Liberal Democrats will use your contact details to send you information on the topics you have requested. Any data we gather will be used in accordance with our privacy policy at [libdems.org.uk/privacy](http://libdems.org.uk/privacy). To exercise your legal data rights, email: [data.protection@libdems.org.uk](mailto:data.protection@libdems.org.uk).