



**North Tyneside Council**

# Young Persons' Question Time

16 October 2014

## Report



Photo: The Panel (l-r) Cllr Gary Bell, Dean Titterton, Cllr David Lilly, Adrian Pitches, Norma Redfearn, Chief Inspector Steve Readdie and Wendy Burke.

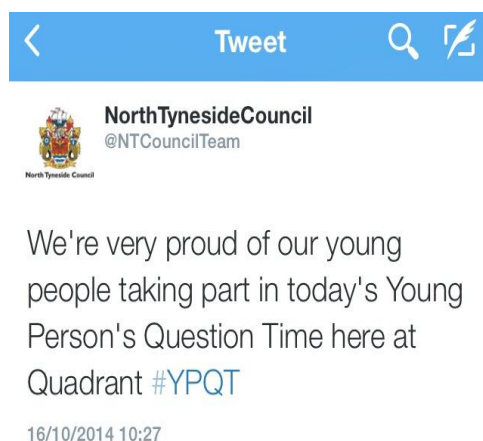
On Thursday 16 October students from five of the borough's middle and high schools quizzed a panel of politicians and other decision makers during a lively and entertaining two-hour long debate which followed the format of the BBC's 'Question Time' programme.

The well-attended event was hosted and chaired by BBC Look North's Adrian Pitches, and formed part of North Tyneside Council's work to mark this year's Local Democracy Week (13 - 19 October 2014).

Young people had been asked to submit their questions on any topic of their choosing and the Chairman of the Council, Councillor Tommy Mulvenna, and the Head of Law and Governance, Vivienne Geary, selected nine to be answered on the day by the panel. A fantastic 66 questions from young people at schools across the borough were submitted and included questions on young people hanging around public areas; schools having the same start and finish times; Whitley Bay Regeneration; development (fracking, house building, developments & demolitions), tuition fees and jobs and opportunities for 16-24 year olds.

Young people aged between 10 and 17 asked their own questions on the day and students from Churchill Community College, George Stephenson High School, Kings Priory School, Marden High School, Norham High School, Seaton Burn Community College and Valley Gardens Middle School all attended the event, which was filmed for broadcast by Marden High School's media team.

This report provides a summary of the answers provided by the panel members to the questions asked at the event. The issues raised by the other questions received will be considered by the Youth Council as part of their work programme in the year ahead.



**1. What suggestions do the panel have for creating jobs and opportunities for 16-24 year olds in areas of high unemployment such as the North East?**

**Answers:**

**Norma Redfearn – Elected Mayor**

We will work with colleges and businesses to ensure that the courses being taught reflect the needs of the employers in the area; a lot of our local businesses are really involved with schools. We need to ensure that work experience opportunities are varied and interesting; work experience is a good way of seeing what is out there and valuable for preparing young people for work in the future. Young people also need to be prepared for interviews and completing application forms. There are lots of companies moving to North Tyneside and there will be lots of opportunity for you and training opportunities in engineering and deep sea oil; grand opportunities in the future. You are fortunate to live in an area which is experiencing positive news.

**Councillor David Lilly**

The council has worked very hard to attract businesses to the area and we now have the most people ever in work and have seen the biggest fall in unemployment since records began and youth unemployment has fallen by a third in the last year. We need to address families where no members of the family have ever worked; when I was young there were people who you would see working and could ask what it was like to work in different types of job, there isn't that opportunity for too many young people now and it causes a downward spiral.



Photo courtesy of The News Guardian

Qualifications are important. 60% of those with no qualifications are unemployed, qualifications are vital. North Tyneside has a very good track record and we need to ensure that every child receives an education that enables them to find employment and to channel them in the right direction for them. Further education is not the aim of everyone; on the job training and qualifications through work are not as valued as further education and they should be. Employees say that young people lack the skills that they require and that nationally 152,000 positions in the construction industry are not filled. Schemes, like the North Tyneside Learning Trust, are every important as it aims to bring industry, in all its forms, into contact with schools. Pupils are offered the many pathways into work and gain an understanding of relevant skills and qualifications required.

There is no quick fix but if we all work hard we can make progress, can get many more companies setting up here and they can give more and more opportunities for you.

## Dean Titterton - YMCA

I'm not from a political background and I think we can all agree to more lobbying for an equal share of funding for the North East which can create opportunities. It is a big issue and resources are needed to create these opportunities. Work experience is important as is the provision of careers advice which is appropriate for each young person. The North Tyneside Strategic Partnership brings together different organisations and groups to work together to improve the quality of life for people living and working in North Tyneside. The North East is a huge place and we need to work together as a borough to create the right opportunities for our young people and have joined up services; we are better working together. Social entrepreneurs need to be bought into the system to understand what strengths they have and how they can be used.

Adrian Pitches then asked John, who had asked the question, what work experience he had done and what he thought of it. John stated that he had worked at the YMCA in the education office and had worked in different parts and did different roles in his time there. He had felt that the office was too restricting as he didn't get out much and that an office job was maybe not for him. Work experience was important to see if what you think you want to do is what you want to do.

## 2. My question is for Northumbria Police – What do you do to stop vandals, and what punishment do you give out to the ones you catch?

### Answers:

#### Norma Redfearn – Elected Mayor

I hope that people look at the borough and feel that it's nice and clean and well looked after and feel proud to be from here and feel good about it and not want to destroy what we have. We do have a strategy and want to work closely with the police and take on board any concerns they have and work together. There are big concerns, like anti-social behaviour on the Metro and people feeling unsafe. There are initiatives like Operation Blackberry which is outreach work involving the police, community safety officers and the safer estates team working to tackle anti-social behaviour across the borough. There are things we can do, if a particular family is causing havoc we can go to court and get them to leave. At the end of the day we need to know where the trouble is so we can do something about it.



#### Chief Inspector Steve Reddie

I want to reiterate what the Chief Executive said about this being the safest borough of its type in the country. We can get good results if we look in the right place and we need to know what's happening to do this, please report vandalism and anti-social behaviour and we can monitor the areas. In particular areas the police have certain powers and can use stop and search.

The night time economy is a cause of anti-social behaviour; two operations had taken place over the weekend and targeted pubs and clubs. There is also the ChildWatch scheme which takes young people home. Graffiti is also an issue and we go into schools to talk to young people about it and can gather an intelligence picture.

I do believe in second chances but an offence requires some punishment in the form of an apology or a letter and possibly compensation. For repeat offenders there are formal cautions which will go on the record, fines and even prison.

### **Councillor Gary Bell**

Vandalism and anti-social behaviour is not acceptable by anyone. The police are not the only answer; we need to instil community values, citizenship and a sense of pride and belonging to an area which will mean people don't want to damage it. It's also important to safeguard the community; there is no such thing as a victimless crime.

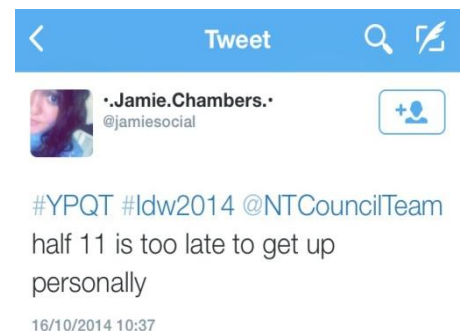
We need to provide facilities for you and as Deputy Chairman of the Council I've had the opportunity to meet young people and see what facilities are available and I've been humbled by the talent I've seen. It's important to remember that it's only a small minority of people who vandalise and behave anti-socially. Community based punishment is useful, make the person fix what has been broken and meet the victim. There is always a victim, please report any activity to the appropriate authorities.

### **3. Why doesn't the school day start a little later so people are at school on time, all of the time?**

#### **Answers:**

#### **Councillor David Lilly**

As a retired teacher I remember liking to getting in early and being able to leave early. I think that whatever time school starts there is no guarantee of everyone being on time all the time. Compared to many of our continental neighbours we are late starters. I do not accept younger people need to stay in bed longer. Perhaps they should go to bed sooner especially as hours of sleep before midnight are of greater benefit than those after midnight. This would enable them to rise bright and early for school. I know there has been some success elsewhere with schools starting later but whatever time school starts that is no guarantee that everyone will arrive on time. In the end, it really comes down to self-discipline which all of us need during our lives. We have to be disciplined to get to school on time and arrive at work promptly, the list goes on.



#### **Wendy Burke – Public Health Consultant**

It is an interesting proposal and there are a number of key issues. I have first hand experience of two teenage daughters and I know how they like their beds and to sleep and to go to bed late and get up late. But, I agree with David and I'm not convinced that a late start would benefit anyone other than as a further opportunity for a lie in and its unknown

what impact the later start time might have on learning. Our academic achievement is fantastic and I wouldn't want to see our standards failing. There are also implications for parents and also for teachers. If each school had its own start time it would be a logistical nightmare for parents. Jobs expect you to start on time and there are lots of jobs where you are expected start much earlier in the morning than school and on balance I think what we have is probably about right.

Adrian Pitches then asked Katie, who had asked the question, what time she would like school to start and why. Katie answered that she thought 9.30am would be good as 8.25am was too early; there was no hurry so another hour in bed would be good.

#### 4. What is in place to help those young people who suffer from issues with illegal substances/cigarettes?

**Answers:**

**Wendy Burke – Public Health Consultant**

I know that locally and nationally drugs, alcohol and substance misuse has a negative impact on young people's health and wellbeing and is a priority area for the public health team. In general the school nursing service drops in at every school across the borough and offers a whole range of advice for young people. A specialised service is offered by N2L, Never too Late, to provide support to young people using illegal drugs and alcohol. They also go into schools and do preventative work with young people and teachers on the risks of using drugs and work on specific problems. School nurses can offer advice on smoking and you can get specific help from GP's and pharmacists. We have good dedicated services for young people in this area.



**Chief Inspector Steve Readdie**

I'm a big believer in Never too Late and fully support it. There are other programmes too, for example P.R.O.P.S (Positive Response to Overcoming Problems of Substance misuse) based at the Linksill Centre provides support and offers programmes for young people and their families. Operation Childsafe, a joint initiative with the Council, targets underage youngsters who gather in public places to drink; they are taken home to their parents which reduces the risk of their committing or becoming the victims of crime and referred to N2L. Many may see legal highs as ok. That is not the case. They are very dangerous and I would urge you not to take them. High profile raids have been conducted and licensing interventions can be made with pubs closed down. Test purchases using young people are made in shops and if they sell to underage people their license can be reviewed although the majority of shops are very good at checking for ID for young people.

**Dean Titterton - YMCA**

There are many bodies to assist in this and take a pro-active approach in intervening and assisting. The YMCA runs the Young Health Champions scheme which aims to recruit

young people as health ambassadors and young health consultants. Our Young Health Champions receive training and mentoring to equip them to promote key health messages around physical activity, smoking cessation, drugs and alcohol. The best way to help young people is through peer mentoring so you can help each other as it is you who are going through it. The Phoenix Detached Youth Project who work with 13-25 year olds in Meadowell, Percy Main, East Howdon, Royal Quays and Chirton is another great example. Communication is needed to get the message out there about what support is available where as it can't be all things to all people; peer mentoring is key, talking to friends and giving them your support is a good place to start.

**5. In light of the Scottish Referendum, should all 16 year olds be allowed to vote?**

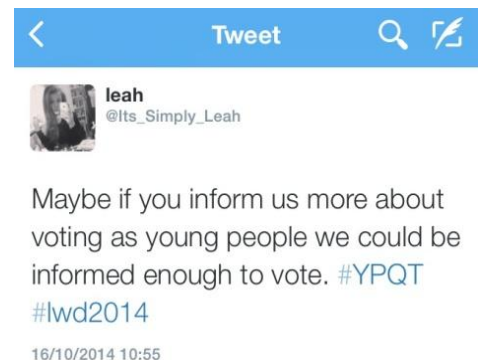
**Answers:**

**Councillor David Lilly**

My gut reaction is no, I do not think 16 year olds should be able to vote as its not just what democracy is about, I do not think they have the experience and life skills at this age. In the Scottish referendum they were identified as likely to support the cause for independence and that is why they were given the vote. I do appreciate that more young people engaged in the process as a result. In North Tyneside we are very fortunate and there are lots of ways for young people to engage in the political process, we have the very successful Young Mayor and Cabinet and Youth Council. You can stand for office and run a campaign to persuade your peers to elect you; the North Tyneside Young Mayoral system is well respected nationwide.

**Councillor Gary Bell**

I disagree, I don't see why not. If you can join the armed forces and have to pay taxes you should be able to vote. Adults don't set a great example, for example, the turnout at the Police and Crime Commissioner election was low and why would young people be any different. When I was 16 there were lots of news outlets so you could inform yourself about the main issues. We need to set an example so you can see the importance of voting and want to go into politics to make a difference. If you can pay taxes you should be able to vote.



**6. I was wondering whether you have made provision in the budget for play sites? Could you make them more advanced; like bigger slides, better swings & more activities whilst also making sure that current equipment is fixed and maintained on a regular basis?**

**Answers:**

**Norma Redfearn – Elected Mayor**

There is £100,000 to maintain play sites. Since 2005 when we had very few play sites in poor condition, officers have worked hard and made bids to the lottery and other

organisations for money and there has been development across the borough. There are now 53 play sites across the borough, 6 play parks and three water play parks so we are well equipped. We didn't design the parks from an adult perspective, we consulted with schools and listened to what young people wanted. For example, Northumberland Park is going to get a BMX track. In anything we do, we will always consult.

### **Wendy Burke – Public Health Consultant**

This is a very important issue, young people in the borough have lots of opportunities to be outdoors and it's beneficial for their health and wellbeing and we need to encourage them to be outside as they can spend a lot of time indoors. As the authority now has responsibility for public health we need to do all we can to improve the health and wellbeing of all people and keep people physically active. There is fantastic provision for play in North Tyneside and there are five state of the art leisure centres with swimming pools and please make use of the free swims initiative.

### **Dean Titterton – YMCA**



I echo what's been said, you don't know how good you've got it. There is always an issue with wear and tear and money is tight but it doesn't need to fall on one organisation. There are other options and we need to do more to let you know about them, like an indoor skate park for winter. We've had street pastors and there will be park pastors to go around and keep an eye on the facilities, it's important that these recreational facilities are maintained and we should look after it together. Remember if something is broken, report it and let people know it needs fixing.

Adrian Pitches then asked Craig what he thought of the play sites. Craig said that the park in Willington Quay often had older teenagers in which put off younger kids but that the park itself was great.

## **7. What sorts of things are put in place to prevent young people from hanging around streets drinking alcohol and causing trouble?**

### **Answers:**

#### **Norma Redfearn – Elected Mayor**

There are so many opportunities for young people to do other things. Dean's point on communication is important. There are lots of play sites, leisure centres and parks with clubs for all sorts of sports like cricket, rugby and football and organisations like the Scouts, the YMCA and Youth Clubs. There are activities organised with the Police, we had the Ban Boredom initiative and summer activities; there are the police cadets, the sea cadets and the air cadets. Youth workers and the voluntary sector can get involved, we should talk to schools about access to their facilities being available for longer outside of school hours and other things that we can do and get the message out about what we do actually offer.

### **Chief Inspector Steve Reddie**

There's a theme developing of how there is a lot on and we need to tell you about it better. A lot of my answer to this question I answered previously with our proactive approach to pubs and clubs and shops and the fantastic work that the street pastors do in Whitley Bay, Cullercoats and Tynemouth. Funding has been assigned from the Police and Crime Commissioner, Vera Braid, for initiatives to make people feel safe on the Metro and work with Wallsend Boys Club and in the summer have beach wardens to engage with young people. There are a lot of things for young people to do, its becoming clear that people don't know what its where and we need to concentrate on how that message is communicated.

### **Dean Titterton – YMCA**

Yes I work for the YMCA but I'm also a Chair of a group called the Children and Young People Provision Group and we've just looked at how what's available and its become apparent today that we need to communicate with young people about what provision there is and with each other so we can signpost our young people to activities and opportunities provided by other organisations. We are working on an App and to have a more interactive website and we need your help to ensure that it tells you what you want it to and is more than just consultation. The youth participation team at North Tyneside Council are fantastic and you have a lot of opportunities and you should make the most of them.



Norma Redfearn added that an estimated £5-8m a year is spent on young people's activities across the borough, its significant and for young people to say there is nothing on means that we need to get our act together. We will work on it, watch this space.

Adrian Pitches asked Katie, who had asked the question, what she thought. Katie didn't think that the activities were publicised well and they should do more in schools and in local area like shopping centres where young people will see the adverts.

### **8. Should North Tyneside rebrand itself as Carlisle has done (Carlisle, City of the Lakes)?**

#### **Answers:**

#### **Councillor David Lilly**

I do not know whether we need to re-brand or just sell our present brand better. We have wonderful nationally acclaimed award winning beaches, historic sites and varied shopping in North Tyneside. I live in Tynemouth and regularly see caravans and 2 or 3 coaches parked at the Park Hotel in Tynemouth so we are obviously part of the coach holiday programme. I regularly drive to Rothbury and what concerns me is when I drive north on the A1, I see numerous foreign vehicles which have most likely come off the ferry at North Shields and immediately driven away to visit Northumberland or Scotland. We need to find ways to keep them in North Tyneside longer than just the afternoon they spend shopping at Royal Quays before boarding the ferry for their return journey, as it will have a positive effect on



the local economy. Maybe try and advertise North Tyneside more in the tourists' home countries so they plan to spend some days here as part of their whole trip. There is no perfect answer.

### **Councillor Gary Bell**

The Council was rebranded when it was established in 1974 and four boroughs were merged into one and One North East had the *Passionate People, Passionate Places* campaign. There is a lot of history in the borough: Dial Cottage in Killingworth and Stephenson's *Blucher* steam locomotive; the Rive Tyne and its associated industry; the *Mauretania* built in 1906 at Wallsend, the fastest ship to America; the Rising Sun Colliery in 1910 was one of the finest in the world and is now a country park; Admiral Collingwood; the Earsdon Pit Disaster which changed mining forever; John Buddle tested the first Davy Lamps in his mines; we have a World Heritage Site at Segedunum. There is too much to be rebranded, what would we choose? A lot has come from one area.

Adrian Pitches asked Connor, who had asked the question, what he would like to see North Tyneside branded as. Connor replied that we should get the word out more and get opinions on what it could be; a strap line could be added to signs on the entrances to the borough.



## **9. Do you think Take That can survive as a trio and what do you think this says about British music?**

### **Answers:**

#### **Councillor Gary Bell**

Amy, Hello, This will only take a minute. If Take That remain as a trio you will have to have a little patience to see if it could be magic. As you know, everything changes, Gary Barlow paying his taxes is more of a pressing issue. The British music industry is varied and vibrant so they will shine and the flood of fans will sell a million love songs.

#### **Dean Titterton – YMCA**

Of course, they are back for good, particularly while Gary Barlow is still there otherwise they come across as style over substance. I think they will survive as a trio.

#### **Councillor David Lilly**

Yes, I think they will survive as they have a big enough loyal, if aging, fan base. British music is vibrant and has much to offer all ages. I cannot pretend to appreciate the music popular with the young people before us and I have great difficulty in understanding how music is listened to today, online and live streaming etc., it's a foreign language to me. In my day it was 45" and 78" vinyl records, I have just about come to terms with CDs. I do wonder how many of your pop idols will still be popular when you reach my age like many of the pop idols of mine and the Mayor's youth who are still popular today.

### **Norma Redfearn – Elected Mayor**

I'm sure they'll survive, the three left are the best singers anyway; Jason Orange was not a singer and Gary Barlow is the best singer with the best solo career. They have a huge fanbase, probably bigger than the Rolling Stones were and people will buy their next record.

### **Chief Inspector Steve Readdie**

The question proves they have a huge fanbase. I'm going to work in numbers. 1 and 2 members in a band would be too small, 4 is too big, I think 3 is just the right size for a great band.

### **Wendy Burke – Public Health Consultant**

I am an unashamed Gary Barlow fan, a big fan; my house was divided by the Gary vs. Robbie debate. Gary Barlow is very good as a song writer and a singer and I think they'll continue for many years to come.

Adrian Pitches asked the audience debate whether the audience thought Take That would survive for another five years; the audience thought they would but the support reduced the more years Adrian added with a small handful supporting Take That still belting out the hits for a further 20 years. Amy was asked what she thought and she said they would continue for a while and for as long as Gary Barlow stayed with them but that he might go out on his own again and that would be the end of the group.



## What they said afterwards:

Norma Redfearn – Elected Mayor



*"I was delighted to be part of this event, and was extremely impressed by the questions that were put to the panel, as well as the eloquence of the students who spoke. All of the young people who took part acted maturely and intelligently and were a credit to their schools and the borough. In addition, our chair Adrian Pitches played a fantastic part as host, and made sure the debate remained fast-paced and upbeat. I hope everyone enjoyed the event as much as I did, and I look forward to similar events in the future."*



Chief Inspector Steve Readdie from North Tyneside Area Command.

*"This was a great opportunity for young people to speak to police and other agencies about a wide variety of topics face to face. By speaking to the panel on a personal level like this, it can help to break down any potential barriers. It was an excellent chance to engage with youngsters and find out what issues are affecting them and that they want to know more about."*



Further info:

<http://www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk/campaign/votes-16/>

<https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>

[Young Mayor, Youth Council and Parliament - North Tyneside Council](#)

[How to report an incident - North Tyneside Council](#)

<http://n21.org.uk/>