

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

At a meeting of the **Cabinet** held in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Morpeth on Tuesday 15 January 2019 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillor W. Daley
(Deputy Leader of the Council, in the Chair)

CABINET MEMBERS

Homer, C.
Jones, V.
Oliver, N.

Riddle, J.
Sanderson, H.G.H.
Wearmouth, R.

OTHER MEMBERS

Davey, J.G.
Dodd, R.R.
Flux, B.
Gallacher, B.

Murray, A.H.
Pidcock, B.
Swithenbank, I.C.F.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Angus, K.

Elsdon, A.
Hadfield, K.

Henry, L.
Lally, D.
Jackson, D.

Johnston, P.

Executive Director HR/OD and
Deputy Chief Executive
Service Director: Finance
Committee Services and Scrutiny
Manager
Legal Services Manager
Chief Executive
Service Director: Education and
Skills
Interim Executive Director of Place

3 members of the press and public were present

Ch.'s Initials.....

77. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Jackson.

78. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the following meetings of Cabinet, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair:-

- (a) Tuesday 11 December 2018
- (b) Wednesday 19 December 2018.

79. DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor Jones disclosed a personal interest in Minute No.74 of the 19 December 2018 Cabinet minutes (Approval of the Council Tax Support Scheme 2019-20).

80. REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

(1) Setting of the Council Tax Base 2019-20

The report advised Cabinet of the tax base calculation for 2019-20 for all domestic properties liable to pay council tax. The tax base had to be set by the statutory deadline of 31 January 2019 (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix A).

Councillor Oliver introduced the report, advising that in view of the Council decision on the Council Tax Support Scheme the previous week, the alternative detailed in recommendation two of the report was not applicable, and members were therefore requested to consider the first recommendation only. The key points to note from the report were that there were just over 1200 more properties than in 2018-19, and the collection rate used to set the Council Tax base and budget had increased to 99.3% as a result of consistent increases in the Council Tax collection rate. There were 1397 less equivalent dwellings entitled to Council Tax support following Council's decision the previous week to approve the 8% reduction.

RESOLVED that, following the decision of Council on 9 January 2019 to approve the 8% reduction in the level of Council Tax Support for all working age claimants, the tax base for 2019-20 be approved as detailed within

Appendix A to the report, which equates to 104,816.71 Band D equivalent dwellings. This was an increase of 2,148.02 Band D equivalents from 2018-19.

(2) Summary of New Capital Proposals considered by Officer Capital Strategy Group

The report summarised proposed amendments to the Capital Programme considered by the officer Capital Strategy Group at its meeting held on 14 December 2018 (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix B).

Councillor Oliver commented that it was a key part of the Administration's strategy to invest in leisure and support Active Northumberland to provide a service which was fit for purpose and would contribute to health across the County. The investment in Wentworth Leisure Centre would allow it to be competitive in the local market and should increase membership and participation, leading to a net nil cost.

Councillor Homer, as Cabinet Member and local member, commented that the leisure centre had always been left to take care of itself but the deterioration in equipment and services was now of concern. There was an opportunity for Active Northumberland to use the leisure centre as a flagship for the organisation, particularly with the co-location of other services such as adult learning into the centre.

Councillor Daley commented the report demonstrated the Administration's ambitious investment programme across the County, including the parks investment proposals.

Councillor Sanderson added that the parks enhancement programme was an important part of the work to benefit both residents and visitors to the County. Significant investment was planned for Ridley Park, Blyth, Alexandra Park, Cramlington, the Mermaid Play Area, Blyth, Gallacher Park, Bedlington and Rothbury Riverside Play Area and he thanked the partner organisations who had been involved in working with the Council on the various improvements.

Councillor Riddle supported these comments and the proposals contained in the report as a good investment strategy across the County.

Members noted that the disabled facilities grant of £290,000 was also a very welcome part of the report and that home adaptations could make a big difference to quality of life, and helping people stay in their own homes for longer.

RESOLVED that the following be approved:

(a) Wentworth Leisure Centre Refurbishment: Approve the proposal and budget requirement of £698,591, to be funded from the Leisure Facilities Improvement budget included in the MTFP;

(b) Parks Enhancement Programme: Approve the schemes and overall budget requirement of £287,000, including £204,000 to be met from the existing Parks Enhancement provision within the Medium Term Capital plan; and,

(c) Disabled Facilities Grant: Accept the additional grant award of £290,616 and increase the budget allocation accordingly.

81. REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

National Funding Formula & School Funding

The report updated Cabinet regarding the National Funding Formula (NFF) and the implications for 2019/20 School Funding in Northumberland (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix C, along with the report of the FACS OSC circulated at the meeting).

Councillor Daley commented on the extensive consultation which had been done with schools, the Schools Forum and Scrutiny. Only 9 responses had been received from schools which indicated the level of contentment amongst schools that the implementation proposals were the right ones.

Mr Jackson highlighted the key points of the report. The delay in national implementation meant that local needs could still be met, and schools had been keen to maintain stability through the retention of formula funding at last year's levels where possible. It was hoped that this could be achieved. The significant pressures on the High Needs Block budget now seemed to be recognised by the Government. Additional funding of £613,233 had been announced very recently and delegated authority was being sought as to how this was spent.

Councillor Daley read the report from Scrutiny which had been circulated.

Councillor Oliver understood how complex the calculations were, and the fact that a solution had been found which schools were happy with and protected them from any shocks was very important. The investment in schools and extra funding provision was also important to help future proof and manage budgets in years to come.

Councillor Daley thanked officers for their work. He stressed that the Authority was taking a proactive approach to this and had made it clear to the Secretary of State recently that the pressures in Northumberland were unique. This was why a resilience programme was being developed, and Northumberland was probably the only Authority in England still investing in its education stock.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the proposals for the phased implementation of the National Funding Formula in 2018/19 be approved, in line with the recommendation of the Schools Forum meeting of 14 November and the results of the subsequent consultation exercise held with schools;
- (b) approval of the final formula values be delegated to to the Executive Director of Adult Social Care & Children’s Services, the Lead Member for Children’s Services and the Deputy Leader of the Council in line with the principles agreed at Schools Forum on 21 November 2018, once the final budget allocations are released by the Department for Education in December;
- (c) the transfer of up to 1% funding from the Schools’ Block to the High Needs Block be approved in line with recommendation of the Schools Forum meeting of 21 November and the results of the subsequent consultation exercise held with schools;
- (d) the Executive Director of Children’s and Adult Services, the Lead Member for Children’s Services and Deputy Leader of the Council be authorised to make representation to DfE to make adjustments to the NFF which reflect the added challenges faced by NCC; and
- (e) the report of the FACS OSC be noted.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....

Ch.’s Initials.....
Cabinet, 15 January 2019