

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

At a meeting of the **Cabinet** held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Morpeth on Tuesday 12 November 2019 at 10.00am.

PRESENT

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

CABINET MEMBERS

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

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

OTHER MEMBERS

Dodd, R.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Angus, K.	Executive Director of HR/OD and Deputy Chief Executive
Bradley, N.	Service Director: Strategic Commissioning and Finance.
Elsdon, A.	Service Director: Finance
Hadfield, K.	Committee Services and Scrutiny Manager
Henry, L.	Legal Services Manager
Lally, D.	Chief Executive
McEvoy-Carr, C.	Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services
O'Farrell, R.	Interim Executive Director, Regeneration, Commercial and Economy
Roll, J.	Democratic Services Manager

Ch.'s Initials.....

1 member of the press was in attendance.

52. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Jackson and Wearmouth.

53. MINUTES

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

(a) Tuesday 08 October 2019

54. REPORTS OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR - FINANCE AND INTERIM

(1) Budget 2020-21 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2020-2023

The report provided an update on the development of the 2020-21 Budget and the Medium Term Financial Plan covering the period 2020 to 2023. It also detailed budget proposals for 2020-21 to meet the budget gap, as a basis for budget consultation, prior to the receipt of the Local Government Finance Settlement 2020-21 in December 2019 (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix A, along with the report of the Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC circulated at the meeting).

The report was introduced by Councillor Oliver who advised that the report detailed the current interim position. A lot of work had been done since the last budget on the savings plan and on the 2020-21 budget. £9.8m of savings needed to be identified and he was confident that a deliverable budget would be achieved, but it would be an ongoing process until next February to get there. Confirmation was still awaited of funding in many areas following the delay in the Spending Round, and there was also much political uncertainty, but hopefully the election would bring some clarification.

He detailed the main points of the report:-

- Savings would be made across all areas
- Modest Council Tax rises
- Invest to save measures and activity to improve the efficiency of the Council
- Alignment to the Corporate Plan
- Key areas of savings were highlighted within the services

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- Central functions - new officers had been recruited to improve efficiency and drive forward collaborative working; training budgets would be centralised; long vacant posts were being examined; further changes to the management structure were planned, lots of work on digital transformation.

The report of the Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC had been circulated. Councillor Oliver referred to the main points and advised that the Committee had supported the report's recommendations.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the revisions to the assumptions within the 2020-21 Budget be noted;
- (b) the budget balancing measures for 2020-21 totalling £9.800 million be approved as a basis for budget consultation, prior to the receipt of the Local Government Finance Settlement 2020-21;
- (c) it be noted that further work is required to refine the Medium Term Financial Plan and that there are still budget balancing measures required to be identified over the term of the Medium Term Financial Plan; and
- (d) the report of the Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC be noted.

(2) Financial Performance 2019-20 - Position at the end of September 2019

The report informed Cabinet of the current financial position for the Council against the Budget for 2019-20 (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix B).

Councillor Oliver advised that the current projected overspend was almost £0.5m. This was comfortable for this point in the year and was no cause for concern. There were a number of both positive and negative variances across all areas, which was to be expected. He made reference to the overspend in IT, which was due to the overrun of the project to deliver Oracle and to the investment in changing systems.

A lot of work was ongoing between the service and finance departments to deal with the overspends during the year. He drew members attention to the awarding body for the Union Chain Bridge being the National Lottery Heritage Fund, not as it was described in the report.

Councillor Homer advised that all Cabinet Members were very familiar with the content of the report and its detail having gone through the issues many times with officers.

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RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the report be noted;
- (b) the projected overspend of £0.445 million be noted;
- (c) the pressures currently identified be noted;
- (d) the current position in relation to the capital programme following the previous reprofiling exercise be noted;
- (e) the virements at Appendix A be noted;
- (f) the new grants at Appendix B and the required changes to the budgets be approved; and
- (g) progress on the delivery of the approved savings at Appendix C be noted.

55. REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR - LOCAL SERVICES

Proposed Implementation of a Northumberland County Council Street Works Permit Scheme.

The report sought approval to implement the Northumberland County Council Street Works Permit Scheme (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix C).

The report was presented by Councillor Sanderson, who referred to the current unsatisfactory arrangements whereby utility companies could simply notify the Authority of work they wished to undertake. This had resulted in many poor reinstatements across the County. Changes introduced by the Government meant that a licensing scheme could now be implemented whereby statutory undertakers would have to seek permission to work in the highway. The scheme would mean that the work could be policed both during and afterwards, which was very good news. Around 10,000 requests were made per year for works and the scheme would ensure that they were carried out to the Council's satisfaction and standard. It was expected that two extra staff would be employed to deal full time with the scheme

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the implementation of a permit scheme for road works and street works for Northumberland (to be known as the “Northumberland County Council Street Works Permit Scheme”) from February 2020 be approved, on the basis of the Cost Benefit Analysis Executive Summary, New Staffing Structure and scheme document attached to the report as Appendices 1 to 3 respectively, and;
- (b) authority be delegated to the Service Director for Local Services to carry out the necessary operational functions required to enable the successful implementation of the new Street Works Permit Scheme from February 2020 and its on-going day to day management and administration.

56. REPORT OF THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - REGENERATION, COMMERCIAL AND ECONOMY

Governance for the Borderlands Partnership

The report outlined the governance arrangements for the delivery of the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal by the Borderlands Partnership, and its immediate implications for the County Council (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix D, along with the report of the Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC circulated at the meeting).

This report was presented by Councillor Oliver, who highlighted the main points:-

- Heads of Terms had now been signed on this very exciting deal of around £70m.
- This was a great opportunity to work with similar authorities
- Operating costs of around £118,000 needed to be found to run the project
- The programmes and projects relevant to Northumberland were - Quality of Place, Destination Borderlands, Digital, Business Infrastructure, Rural Innovation and Energy.
- Formal governance arrangements would be put in place as detailed in paragraph 5 of the report.
- The Economic Forum would include business community members and would collectively support and guide the activities of the growth deal. The County Council would be the accountable body this side of the border.
- Officers of the County Council had played leading roles in developing the deal.

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Members spoke in full support of the report, welcomed the opportunity to work more closely with neighbouring authorities, and acknowledged both the work so far to get to this point, and the ongoing work on business cases.

The report from the Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC had been circulated. Councillor Oliver advised that there had been a detailed discussion at the meeting and members had supported the report. The Committee had been advised that further funding could become available and officers were talking to the Government about other projects which were in the pipeline for development.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the Collaboration Agreement be approved as the basis for providing the Governance Framework for the delivery of the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal by the Borderlands Partnership whilst recognising that the County Council will act as the accountable body for funds invested by the UK Government in England and as the host authority for the staff recruited to the Programme Management Office (PMO);
- (b) it be agreed that the operating costs associated with the delivery of the Growth Deal are shared equitably between the participating authorities as detailed at para 19;
- (c) Cabinet approve funding of £118,000 (£14,000 2019-20 and £104,000 2020-21) recurrently for the phase 1 Growth Deal Operating Costs from the Council's contingency with subsequent authority given to the Leader and Chief Executive, as required, to approve future variations to this amount; and
- (d) the report of the Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC, and the comments made, be noted.

57. REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR - STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING AND FINANCE

Summary of New Capital Proposals Considered by Officer CSG

The report summarised a proposed amendment to the Capital Programme considered by the officer Capital Strategy Group at its meeting held on 11 October 2019 (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix E)..

It was noted that the carbon reduction implication in the report was not correct.

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RESOLVED that Cabinet approve the capital budget requirement of £377,670 for the installation of Solar PV panels at 5 sites (Dene Park House, Eddie Ferguson House, Stakeford Depot, Riverside Centre and Willowburn Leisure Centre), to be met from renewable energy provision within the 2020-21 capital plan.

58. LOCAL AREA COUNCIL FEEDBACK

Cabinet was asked to receive feedback from recent Local Area Council meetings (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix F).

With regard to Minute No.62 of the Tynedale LAC, Councillor Sanderson commented that officers were always very reactive to requests to attend meetings but members needed to be realistic regarding the ability to keep paths clear of leaves. Regarding the doorstep glass collection pilot, he cautioned that whilst proposals were currently being developed, it was unlikely that they would be implemented in the current financial year.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

59. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

- (a) That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item on the Agenda as it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Act, and
- (b) That the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure for the following reasons:

Agenda Item	Paragraph of Part I of Schedule 12A
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10	3 - This report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
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The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the interest in disclosure because commercial negotiations are currently ongoing with the landowner regarding the acquisition.

60. REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR - STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING AND FINANCE

Affordable Housing Sites Approval

The report proposed an amendment to the Capital Programme considered by the officer Capital Strategy Group at its meeting held on 11 October 2019 (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix G, coloured pink and marked Not for Publication).

RESOLVED that the recommendations detailed in paragraph 2 of the report be approved.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....