

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

At a remote meeting of the **Cabinet** held on Tuesday 8 December 2020 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillor G. Sanderson
(Leader of the Council, in the Chair)

CABINET MEMBERS

Dodd, R.
Oliver, N.
Renner-Thompson, G.

Riddle, J.R.
Watson, J.G.
Wearmouth, R.

OTHER MEMBERS

Flux, B.

Pattison, W.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Angus, K.

Bradley, N.

Hadfield, K.

Hand, C.

Lally, D.

Masson, N.

McLoughlin, J.

McEvoy-Carr, C.

O'Farrell, R.

Roll, J.

Executive Director of HR/OD and
Deputy Chief Executive
Service Director – Strategic
Commissioning and Finance
Democratic and Electoral Services
Manager
Executive Director of Finance
Chief Executive
Principal Solicitor
Executive Director: Regeneration,
Commercial and Economy
Executive Director of Adult Social
Care and Children's Services
Interim Executive Director: Place
Head of Democratic and Electoral
Services

137. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Ch.'s Initials.....

Apologies were received from Councillor Jones.

138. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 10 November 2020, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

139. DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

Councillor Wearmouth advised that both and Councillor Renner Thompson had an interest to declare in respect of item 5 on the agenda (Walkergate, Berwick) as directors of Advance Northumberland and would not take part in that item.

140. REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

(1) Setting of the Council Tax Base 2021-22

The report advised Cabinet of the tax base calculation for 2021-22 for all domestic properties liable to pay council tax. The tax base had to be set by the statutory deadline of 31 January 2021 (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix A).

The S151 Officer highlighted the key points for members.

RESOLVED that the council tax base for 2021-22 be approved as detailed within Appendix A, equating to 106,934.93 Band D equivalent dwellings. This was an increase of 66.01 Band D equivalents from 2020-21.

(2) Financial Performance 2020-21 - Position at the end of September 2020

The report informed Cabinet of the current financial position for the Council against the Budget for 2020-21 (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix B).

The report was introduced by Councillor Oliver. The six month position was a credit to officers in Finance and across all other directorates. There was currently a projected overspend of £5m from a total Council spend of around £800m. The impact of Covid had been partly offset by government funding and underspends in various budgets because some projects had slowed down or just hadn't proceeded. Further funding of £3.164m was expected and £2m towards sales fees and charges lost income. This would leave a £2m overspend at year end.

The Government was currently consulting on how the £100m for leisure would be spent and hopefully the Authority would benefit from this. Some reprofiling of the capital programme was taking place.

He highlighted the main variances:

- The DSG was on budget
- There had been an underspend in public health
- There was an overspend in the HRA detailed in the report
- Capital receipts were detailed on pg 12
- Treasury management was detailed from pg 13
- Individual Directorate summaries were included.

Councillor Watson asked whether there was any information on the detail of the £100m funding for leisure yet. Councillor Oliver advised that this hadn't yet been received though he had received some information from a colleague recently which he could forward on.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the report be noted'
- (b) the projected overspend of £5.159 million be noted;
- (c) the pressures currently identified, including the impact of Covid-19, be noted;
- (d) it be noted that the Council will receive further funding totalling £3.164 million to assist with the ongoing Covid-19 pressures;
- (e) it be noted that the Council will receive further funding in relation to the income that the Council has "lost" as a result of Covid-19. A claim of £1.568 million had been made for April to July and the full year was estimated to be £2.045 million;
- (f) Cabinet approve a further net re-profiling of £30.288 million to the capital programme; £35.992 million from 2020-21 to 2021-22; and £5.704 million from 2021-22 to 2020-21 to reflect estimated expenditure levels in the current financial year;
- (g) the new grants and amendments to existing grants at Appendix A and the required changes to the budgets be noted; and
- (h) the progress on the delivery of the approved savings at Appendix B be noted.

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

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 on 2 November 2020 (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix C).

141.1 Rural Growth Network Local Growth Fund

RESOLVED that the additional grant award of £300,820 be accepted and an increase in the associated budget provision - £250,000 in 2020-21 and £50,820 in 2021-22, be approved.

141.2 Borderlands Investment Programme – Carlisle Station

Members were reminded that the County Council, as the accountable body, was responsible for administering the spend.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the grant funding of £20.000 million from The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) be accepted;
- (b) Cabinet approve a grant award, as part of Borderlands Investment Programme, of £20.000 million to Cumbria Council for the Carlisle Station Gateway Project; and
- (c) Cabinet approve the associated budget provision within the Council's capital programme of £16.900 million in 2020-21 and £3.100 million in 2021-22.

141.3 Walkergate, Berwick– Independent Living Accommodation

In accordance with Minute No. 139 above, Councillors Renner Thompson and Wearmouth left the meeting whilst this matter was discussed.

Members were advised that the County Council would have accommodation rights for this development. There was provision within the MTFP which would meet the cost, and the level of demand for this type of service was set out in paragraphs 8.7- 8.12 of the report.

The Leader thanked the local member, Catherine Seymour, for all the work she had done on this.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the purchase of the leasehold of the site at Walkergate, Berwick from Advance Northumberland at a cost of £180,000 be approved; and
- (b) the transfer of £180,000 from the Supported Housing provision in the

existing 2021-22 programme to cover the associated budget requirement in 2020-21 be approved.

Councillors Renner Thompson and Wearmouth returned to the meeting.

141.4 Blyth Northern Gateway

The proposal was to widen the scheme to a broader Northern Gateway project. This would provide a better solution to the overall development of Blyth Town centre.

Councillor Wearmouth commented this project was an excellent start to improving Blyth Town Centre and the proposal was to extend this to create a Northern Gateway into the town square. He fully supported it and expected that work would start at the beginning of the year.

Members were advised that the work would vastly improve the quality of the streetscape, which now looked quite dated, along with an update to the street furniture which would make it more user friendly and inviting for people to spend time there. More details of the schematics could be provided for members as they came forward and members agreed that they would like an update in due course.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the preferred scheme involving improvements on Bowes St as well as pedestrian improvements to Wanley and Church St be approved;
- (b) Cabinet accept the grant award of £750,000 from the MHCLG Towns Fund; and
- (c) Cabinet approve additional capital programme funding of £455,000 from the Strategic Regeneration Projects provision, and therefore a total budget provision for the project of £1,317,740 as profiled in paragraph 9.11.

141.5 Full Fibre Network

Councillor Oliver commented that this was a significant grant from government, topped up with money from the Council, to connect public buildings. It would allow improvements to be made to the delivery of public services and would bring the very best fibre broadband to these properties, and would also help nearby businesses and homes. It was estimated that 6,400 houses would get connectivity.

It was expected that the first 45 of the sites would be connected by the end of the year. He had met recently with the Digital Minister Matt Warman and Guy Opperman MP and they were really engaging with the Authority to get rural areas connected across Northumberland.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the grant award of £7,865,200 from the Department of Media, Culture and Sport (DCMS) be accepted; and
- (b) Cabinet approve the associated increase in the budget provision within the Council's capital programme of £2,394,400 in 2020-21 and £5,470,800 in 2021-22.

141.6 Car Parking Improvement Programme – Alnwick and Amble

Councillor Watson supported the proposal for motorhome spaces on the periphery of town to prevent spaces being taken up in the town centre. The area identified already existed unofficially as parking area for motorhomes.

The Leader welcomed the investment as this was an issue right up the coast of the County.

Councillor Renner Thompson welcomed the proposal for additional car parking in Alnwick which he felt was in an ideal location and would provide a good use of the site.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) Cabinet accept the proposals for the two sites;
- (b) an allocation of £960,000 (£10,000 2020-21, £950,000 2021-22) from the existing car parking provision in the capital programme be approved to enable the construction of a new 196 space car park on part of the former Duchess High School site in Alnwick; and
- (c) Cabinet approve an allocation of £5,000 (2021-22) from the existing car parking provision in the capital programme to begin work on design proposals for motorhome parking bays at Amble Braid.

141.7 Contracts in Excess of Directors Delegated Limits

RESOLVED that the proposed commitment of £4.479 million in respect of the front of house contract for County Hall be approved.

142. 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 items on the Agenda as they involve 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
8	3 Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
AND	The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure because the commercial interests of a third party and commercial negotiations on land purchase would be prejudiced.

143. REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

New Berwick Theatre: Outline Business Case

The report sought approval of the Outline Business Case for the new Maltings venue in Berwick-upon-Tweed for submission to the UK Government within the context of the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, whilst recognising the associated need to increase the car parking capacity of the town (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix D, coloured pink and marked not for publication, along with the report of the Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC).

Councillor Wearmouth advised that should the discussion stray into any matters related to the involvement of Advance then he would declare an interest.

Janice Rose went through the report in detail with members.

Councillor Watson asked for an update on councillor representation on the Board of Trustees. Members were advised that this was being picked up as part of the wider review of governance arrangements for theatres around the County.

Members very much welcomed the proposals and believed they would have a much wider benefit to the County.

With regard to the report from the CSEG OSC, members were advised as follows:-

“There was some discussion regarding car parking capacity and the need to continue to make a case to Network Rail for more frequent train services to Berwick Station. The Committee also felt that when the governance arrangements for the project were reviewed, the involvement of local members on the Board should be considered.

The Committee therefore agreed that, subject to the comments above, the Cabinet be advised that it supported the recommendations in the report”.

Janice Rose agreed that there was some work to do with Network Rail to both improve the timing of trains, and to get later trains into the service. Members felt these were very relevant comments from Scrutiny and agreed that they should be supported.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) recommendations 1-4 in the report be agreed; and
- (b) the recommendations from CSEG OSC detailed above be supported.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....