

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

CORPORATE SERVICES AND ECONOMIC GROWTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the **Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in the Chairman's Dining Room, County Hall, Morpeth on Monday, 24 September 2018 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT

Councillor D. Bawn
(Chairman in the Chair)

COUNCILLORS

Beynon, J.
Castle, G.
Grimshaw, L.
Parry, K.

Robinson, M.
Roughead, G.
Simpson, E.
Wilson, T.

PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

Jackson, P.
Oliver, N.

Leader of the Council
Corporate Services and Cabinet Secretary

OFFICERS

K. Angus

Executive Director of HR and OD and
Deputy Chief Executive

B. Scarr

Executive Director of Finance and Deputy
Chief Executive

P. Johnston

Executive Director of Place

J. Rose

Principal Policy Officer

M. Readman

Head of Customer Services

S. Nicholson

Scrutiny Co-ordinator

OTHER COUNCILLORS IN ATTENDANCE

Hill, G.

Seymour, C.

25. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M. Swinburn.

26. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC held on 3 September 2018, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

27. SCRUTINY OF CABINET REPORTS

27.1 Borderland Inclusive Growth Deal

The Chairman agreed to bring this item forward on the agenda to allow the Leader of the Council to attend another appointment.

The Leader of the Council circulated a statement to all those present setting out the background to the Borderlands Deal - a copy is enclosed with the signed minutes. He noted that the Committee would consider a confidential report later on the agenda, but agreed to respond to any questions in public as he felt able to do, including:

- in response to a query regarding the creation of jobs and apprenticeships for local people, the Committee were advised that it was anticipated that the Deal would encourage business growth;
- a change of government either side of the border or a move towards an independent Scotland would not affect the proposal as the signed Deal would be established over a 10 year period, and
- the knowledge exchange hubs would be sited in areas where need was best demonstrated.

The Committee then sought to discuss the confidential report under item 10 on the agenda and therefore **RESOLVED** that

- (a) 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) 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

10 3 - This report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the interest in disclosure because disclosure would adversely affect the Authority's ability to conduct its affairs.

This report outlined the content of the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix E).

The Committee were requested to comment on the proposals contained in the report prior to it's determination by the Cabinet on 25 September 2018.

In addition to a number of points of clarification regarding consultations with town and parish councils, locals forums, etc and the anticipated impact on rural businesses and communities, members commented on the membership of the Partnership Board and potential access to revenue funding for particular schemes.

The Committee also acknowledged and expressed their gratitude for the work that officers had undertaken in preparation of the bid.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet be advised that the Committee supports the recommendations as set out in the report, subject to the comments above.

The Committee then **RESOLVED** to return to item 4 (1) on the agenda and conduct the remainder of the meeting in public.

27.2 Budget 2019-20 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2019-22

This report detailed provisional additional budget proposals for 2019-20 to 2021-22 to meet the remaining budget gap as a basis for budget consultation, prior to the receipt of the Local Government Finance Settlement 2019-20 in December 2018. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix A).

The Committee were requested to comment on the proposals contained in the report prior to it's determination by the Cabinet on 9 October 2018. Comments and queries included:

- they noted that job losses would be avoided, but if needed would be voluntary where possible. However, there were no proposals to lose jobs at this stage;
- 'operational efficiencies' and 'fee optimisation' opportunities were being examined which may include the reorganisation of waste collection routes to make them more efficient or reviewing fees for the collection of garden waste, and

- proposals to establish a number of invest-to-save projects were being examined.

In addition, Councillor Grimshaw sought clarification regarding a proposed saving from Adult and Children's services of approximately £10m identified by the previous Administration, but deferred in the last budget. She suggested that it was subsequently identified as an overspend this year and that £10m had been found to balance cuts up to 2022, following an announcement that reserves had been lowered. She asked whether that £10m had been taken from those reserves. Councillor Jackson, Leader of the Council, responded that the proposals in the previous Administration's budget were not realistic and although the headline saving had been included in the previous Administration's budget no actual savings had been identified, therefore such a saving was not deliverable and consequently the £10m overspend had not been allocated.

RESOLVED that the Chairman advise the Cabinet that the Committee supports the recommendations contained in the report, subject to the comment above.

27.3 Loan Governance

This report sought Cabinet agreement to the revised governance procedure for managing the loan facility with Arch and Advance Northumberland. (Report enclosed as Appendix B).

The Committee were requested to comment on the proposals contained in the report prior to its determination by the Cabinet on 9 October 2018.

The Committee referred to the report they considered in June 2018 "Arch Transition and Establishment of New Company", when they were advised that a Panel would be established to oversee the company's operation and regarding the proposal to establish an external loans Board, members reiterated their previous request that a non-cabinet member be included on that body.

RESOLVED that the Chairman advise the Cabinet that the Committee supports the recommendations contained in the report, subject to the comment above.

28. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORTS

28.1 Customer Feedback

The purpose of this report was to provide an overview of the Council's Corporate Feedback system and present information on customer feedback from informal resolutions, complaints, suggestions and comments and compliments received into the Council for the period April 2017 to March 2018. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix C).

Members were advised that a review of how data was being collected and used was being undertaken and the draft strategy document would be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED that a full review of the way in which customer feedback is handled and used by the council to inform learning and continuous improvement, be agreed.

29. REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATOR

Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator presented the Committee's Work Programme for 2018/19. (Report enclosed as Appendix D).

Members were asked to note that the meeting scheduled for 1 October had been cancelled and that an additional meeting on 22 October had be arranged.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

30. INFORMATION REPORT - POLICY DIGEST

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator advised the Committee that the Policy Digest provided details of the latest policy briefings, government announcements and ministerial speeches which may be of interest to members. The report could be accessed through the service finder element of County Council's website at www.northumberland.gov.uk.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

Chairman _____

Date _____