

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, 11 November 2019 at 9.30am.

PRESENT

Councillor D. Bawn
(Chair, in the Chair)

COUNCILLORS

Cessford, T.
Grimshaw, L.
Parry, K.

Robinson, M.
Roughead, G.
Seymour, C.

ALSO PRESENT

Oliver, N.

Sanderson, G.

OFFICERS

C. Angus
R. Caygill
A. Elsdon
D. Lally
L. Little
S. Nicholson
J. Rose
A. Ward

Scrutiny Officer
Trainee Solicitor
Service Director - Finance
Chief Executive
Democratic Services Officer
Scrutiny Co-ordinator
Head of Economy and Regeneration
Communications Lead - External,

Press: 1

20. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Beynon, Simpson, Swithenbank and Jackson.

21. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC held on 8 July 2019, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the chair.

22. FORWARD PLAN OF KEY CABINET DECISIONS

Members received details of forthcoming reports to be considered by the Cabinet. (Schedule enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix A.)

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

23. CABINET REPORTS PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED BY THE COMMITTEE

Members received details of reports from this committee and the Cabinet decisions on the 'Blyth Relief Road', 'Advance Northumberland' and 'Northumberland Lottery' which had previously been considered (summary enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix B.)

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

24. SCRUTINY OF CABINET REPORTS

The following reports would be considered by Cabinet on 12 November 2019. The committee were asked to comment on the proposals contained in the reports.

241.1 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. This report also details 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. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix C.)

Councillor N. Oliver, Cabinet Secretary and Member for Corporate Services provided a detailed introduction to the report advising that uncertainty remained due to the lack of information being available due to the forthcoming election, however work was continuing, based on a worse case scenario, in order to allow a balanced budget to be set. Members were informed that whilst not all savings had been achieved for the current year good progress had been made. The proposed savings under each service area were highlighted.

The Committee sought clarification on a number of issues across the service areas, with the following information being noted:-

- The Administration's strong commitment towards Adults and Childrens' Services was reiterated during a discussion regarding where efficiencies would be made within the service. Mrs. D. Lally, Chief Executive advised that as this was the largest budget within the Council inconsistencies of spending against the set budget were common and expected. Assurance

was given that the budget was well managed to ensure it was spent well on looking after some of the most vulnerable adults and children within the County and provided best value for residents.

- In respect of transport budgets some savings would be achieved from Post 16 transport along with efficiencies in the distance vehicles travel across the County. A review of funding allocation to bus services was also to be undertaken to encourage more use of public transport which would also alleviate car parking issues within the summer months in coastal towns and villages.
- Efficiencies within training would be made by centralising the training budget and additional use of on-line digital training packages if appropriate.
- Budget consultations would assist in the delivery of services in a more efficient way.
- There were a broad range of partners involved in the provision of arts and culture across the County, some of a more commercial nature, however the aim was to draw out the best quality on a limited budget and those which would have the maximum impact for residents making Northumberland a more vibrant place.
- Clarification was sought regarding the allocation of the Transformation Fund with Members being advised that this was a work in progress as officer group workstreams were being set up to develop agile and flexible working practises to modernise services. This would achieve better delivery of services to residents by working as one Council and investing to save. Greater detail regarding the allocation of the Transformation Fund would be provided in the February 2020 report.

RESOLVED that Cabinet be advised that the committee supported the recommendations as outlined in the report.

24.2 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. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix D.) Councillor Oliver provided a short introduction to the report. A draft Governance Structure was circulated at the meeting a copy of which would be filed with the signed minutes and uploaded to the Council's website.

The Committee welcomed the report and noted that the proposals would ensure that the constituent authorities were able to attract the maximum available funding through the partnership arrangements.

In response to questions from Members of the Committee the following information was noted:-

- Business plans were being drawn up over the coming months to ensure that nominated projects could be successful in a tender process. In relation to Destination Borderlands, it was clarified that all had to prove that they were capable of attracting international visitors.
- Whilst Northumberland would be the host authority for staff recruited to the Programme Management Office, these senior staffing positions would work in an agile way and may not be based in Northumberland.
- There would be a full, open and transparent process for appointment of representatives to the Economic Forum.
- It was clarified that the auditing function would be done by the two Accountable Bodies reporting to the Borderlands Partnership Board.

RESOLVED that Cabinet be advised that the committee supported the recommendations as outlined in the report.

25. REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATOR

Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme and Monitoring Report

Members received the committee's work programme and monitoring report for the 2019/20 council year. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix E.) The Scrutiny Co-ordinator advised that as all Scrutiny Members were to be invited to attend for the Debt Recovery - Enforcement item it had been agreed that this be deferred to the meeting on 13 January 2020.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Chair _____

Date _____