

# **NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL**

## **CABINET**

At a meeting of the **Cabinet** held at the Swan Centre, Berwick on Monday 10 September 2018 at 10.00 am.

## **PRESENT**

Councillor P.A. Jackson  
(Leader of the Council, in the Chair)

## **CABINET MEMBERS**

Daley, W.  
Homer, C.  
Jones, V.

Oliver, N.  
Sanderson, H.G.H.  
Wearmouth, R.

## **OTHER MEMBERS**

Davey, J.G.  
Dodd, R.R.  
Hill, G.  
Murray, A.H.

Renner-Thompson, G.  
Roughead, G.  
Seymour, C.

## **OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Bradley, N.

Hadfield, K.

Henry, L  
Holmes, S.  
Lally, D.  
Tweedy, M.

Service Director, Strategic  
Commissioning and Finance,  
Northumbria Healthcare  
Committee Services and Scrutiny  
Manager  
Legal Services Manager  
Clinical Commissioning Group  
Chief Executive  
Chief Executive, Active  
Northumberland

Around 250 members of the press and public were present.

Ch.'s Initials.....

## **27. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Riddle.

## **28. REPLACEMENT OF BERWICK LEISURE CENTRE**

The report sought agreement to the development of improved leisure facilities in Berwick (copy attached to the signed minutes, along with the report of the Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC circulated at the meeting).

Introductions were made and the Leader reiterated that the Cabinet was discussing the leisure centre, not the hospital, as this was outwith the Council's remit. The Leader commented that there had been little progress in the area generally for the last 42 years, with much discussion about what might be done in the area, but very little achieved. However, this was about to change.

The Leader referred to the misinformation about the proposals which had been circulating, which would be corrected at the meeting, and felt it was time for the people of Berwick to have a more optimistic view. A lot of effort was being made on initiatives which would make a difference to the community and these would be delivered. Around 1/3 of the Swan Centre was currently closed due to neglect, it was being operated at a loss and there was a backlog of maintenance issues. A fresh start was needed to provide a top class facility which people could be proud of.

Full details of the services were still to be mapped out and the Council would be engaging with the community on that. Today, Cabinet was being asked to give approval to the construction and to an increase in the capital programme. The planning, consultation and engagement process would begin in due course.

The Leader referred to concerns received by email and detailed the main points and his response, in order to put right any false understanding of the situation:-

- Most concerns had been about the hospital service. The Health Trust had assured the Council that there would be no change to the current services provided; in fact there would be some enhancements, more outpatient provision and a wider range of diagnostic services. The health proposals were still at outline stage and would become more detailed through time in consultation with the community.
- There were benefits to be gained from sharing a site around wellbeing and keeping people out of hospital.

- Services at the leisure centre would be maintained and enhanced where possible, and the aim was to keep the current centre open until the new one was open.
- A brand new leisure centre would be brought to Berwick, with a possible combined investment figure of £50m. There was a lot of engagement still to do with residents of all ages. He urged the local community to work with the Council to make sure this happened.

Councillor Homer detailed some of the background to the current position. She advised that the Swan Centre was the worst performing centre in Active Northumberland's portfolio and membership was still declining, even since the recent restructure of charges. There were opportunities for the new centre to increase visitor numbers to the town through the provision of wet weather facilities and she very much welcomed the proposed investment, and was excited about the opportunities going forward.

Councillor Wearmouth referred to the increased visitor numbers and queried what could be achieved. Mr Tweedy referred to the significant investment being considered and advised that the Council would be working with the Trust to enhance facilities and services, and to open up the services to a wider group of people. The offer available needed to appeal to the tourist market to attract those people in to use the facilities as well.

Councillor Jones asked about the integration of health and leisure facilities with adult services and the support which could be provided there. Mr Tweedy advised that a progressive approach to the provision of leisure services would be taken, as was being done elsewhere in the country. This would help to support care in the community for those with health conditions eg programmes for older people to use the facilities off peak, providing social interaction. Also, the provision of bespoke affordable projects so people could have support in the community. There would also be opportunities to support those with adult learning difficulties through the provision of employment.

In terms of finance, Councillor Oliver reported that members were being asked to make a commitment within the capital programme to a maximum budget of £20m. This was something the previous Administration had promised before the election. However, there had been no real plans to deliver on this. This was a firm commitment from the Administration and he asked the public to judge members on their actions.

Councillor Watson had chaired the recent Scrutiny meeting when the hospital issue had been considered. The Committee's role was to look at the process, specifically, whether the proposals represented a substantial variation, whether the engagement process had been robust and whether the proposals would meet the health needs of the population. This had been looked at in detail and it had been accepted that there would be no

diminution of services. NHS England had confirmed that the proposals did not represent a substantial variation. The Committee had accepted this, that the engagement process had been robust and that the proposals would meet the health needs of the population.

As a result of the representations which had been made, the Leader advised that the recommendations in the report had been amended. These had been circulated in the meeting. It was **RESOLVED** unanimously:-

- (a) to approve the construction of a new leisure centre in Berwick as an integrated Council facility with services likely to incorporate learning disability day services;
- (b) to delegate the decision on whether the scheme will be standalone or a joint scheme with Northumbria Healthcare Trust to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, subject to a full business case;
- (c) to recommend that Council approve an increase in the capital programme allocation for the leisure centre development, to a maximum budget of £20m; and
- (d) to note the report and comments of the Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC.

**CHAIR**.....

**DATE**.....

Ch.'s Initials.....

*Cabinet, 10 September 2018*