

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

At a meeting of the **Cabinet** held in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Morpeth on Tuesday 12 February 2019 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

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

CABINET MEMBERS

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

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

OTHER MEMBERS

Cessford, T.
Davey, J.G.
Dodd, R.R.
Flux, B.
.

Grimshaw, L
Hill, G.
Roughead, G.
Seymour, C.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Angus, K.

Aviston, S.

Bradley, N.

Elsdon, A.
Hadfield, K.

Henry, L.
Lally, D.
Johnston, P.

Executive Director HR/OD and
Deputy Chief Executive
Head of School Organisation and
Resources
Service Director: Strategic
Commissioning and Finance
Service Director: Finance
Committee Services and Scrutiny
Manager
Legal Services Manager
Chief Executive
Interim Executive Director of Place

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6 members of the press and public were present

Councillor Jackson commented on the recent and sudden death of Councillor Bernard Pidcock. Bernard had been a very well regarded and committed member of the Council and a great representative of his community. His passing had been a great shock to everyone, and he would be sadly missed. Members stood for a minute's silence as a mark of respect to their colleague.

82. MINUTES

With regard to Minute No.80 (2) (Summary of New Capital Proposals), and in respect of Wentworth Leisure Centre, Councillor Homer advised that she had said that the Centre had been financially sustainable but had always had to wash its own face.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 15 January 2019, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair, taking into account these comments.

83. DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor Homer disclosed a personal, non-pecuniary interest in item 5(1) on the agenda (Outline Business Case for the replacement of school buildings for Hadrian's Learning Trust Schools), having three children at the school. She was happy that she could make a balanced decision on the report.

Councillor Oliver disclosed a personal interest in the same item having one child at the school.

Councillor Jones disclosed a personal interest in item 4(1) on the agenda (Medium Term Financial Plan 2019-22 and Budget 2019-20) as regards the council tax support scheme.

Mr Henry advised members that there was no pecuniary interest to declare in respect of item 5 (1) on the agenda unless it related to a planning application, or to a matter of financial advantage to the councillor, or a member of the councillor's family, neither of which applied in this case.

84. REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

(1) Medium Term Financial Plan 2019-22 and Budget 2019-20

The purpose of the report was to enable the Cabinet to make formal budget recommendations to the County Council.

The report provided the Medium Term Financial Plan 2019-22 and Budget for 2019- 20, following the Government's Autumn Budget of 29 October 2018 and the publication of the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement on 13 December 2018. (Budget document attached to the signed minutes, along with the report of the Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC and feedback from the Local Area Councils circulated at the meeting).

Councillor Oliver introduced the report, thanking officers for their hard work in the preparation of it. This had been a challenging process, with £36m of savings to be found over the next three years. The majority of these had now been identified and he thanked Cabinet colleagues for their involvement in the process. The picture was not all pessimistic, and significant opportunities had been identified. Some of the points to note were that front line service delivery would be unchanged or improved, savings were proportionate to the budget spend where possible and spread across the County, an invest to save approach was creating extra capacity which supported the revenue cost of service delivery, and attempts were being made to reduce demand on services where possible. Good progress was also being made to attract new investment into the County.

The Leader commented that additional funding had been identified for areas where there were significant pressures - adult social care and special educational needs. Extra funding had been built into the budget for post 16 transport provision in line with the commitment given by the Administration for this area. Councillor Oliver drew members' attention to page 72 of the report, which detailed the base and final budgets.

It was noted that there had been extensive consultation on the report and the report from Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC, and feedback from the Local Area Councils, had been circulated to members.

Councillor Daley commented that the Administration had managed to reduce the Authority's debt from £1.7bn to £700m whilst still investing in core services and communities. He commended Cabinet colleagues and officers for this.

RESOLVED that Council be recommended to:-

(1)(a) approve the Medium Term Financial Plan covering the period 2019-22 detailed within Appendix 1 and the revenue budget for 2019-20; including the requirement to deliver budget balancing targets equating to £12.8 million in 2019-20 and £36.4 million over the period 2019 to 2022;

(1)(b) note that the figures contained within the Medium Term Financial Plan 2019-22 within Appendix 1 are based on the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement of 18 December 2018; and, take into account the Council being part of the North of Tyne 75% Business Rates Pool Pilot with Newcastle City and North Tyneside Councils;

(2) note the estimated retained Business Rates and the Top-Up grant funding received by the Council over the period of the Medium Term Financial Plan;

(3) note the £1.3 million contribution required to fund the estimated cumulative Collection Fund Business Rates deficit at 31 March 2019;

(4) note the receipt of non-recurrent grant funding of £1.0 million for 2018-19 funded from a surplus on the National Business Rates Retention Levy/Safety Net account, some of which will be utilised in 2019-20;

(5) note the estimated receipt of the New Homes Bonus of £6.0 million for 2019-20 and the indicative allocation of £17.5 million over the period of the Medium Term Financial Plan;

(6) note the total estimated receipt of Improved Better Care Fund grant of £10.6 million in 2019-20 and £31.8 million over the period of the Medium Term Financial Plan;

(7) note the receipt of non-recurrent Social Care Support grant and Winter Pressures grant of £4.1 million in 2019-20;

(8) approve a 2.99% increase in Council Tax for 2019-20, noting that this is in line with the Government's assumptions regarding the Council's Core Spending Power. Note that the Medium Term Financial Plan 2019-22 includes a 1.99% annual increase in Council Tax over the remaining period of the plan, and, that an estimate of annual Tax Base growth has been included;

(9) note the contribution of protected Collection Fund Council Tax balances of £2.3 million in 2019-20 to support the Medium Term Financial Plan;

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- (10) approve a 1% increase in Council Tax in 2019-20 for use on Adult Social Care services; raising an additional £1.9 million in 2019-20. Note that the Medium Term Financial Plan assumes an increase of 2% for future years which would raise an additional £7.7 million for use on Adult Social Care services;
- (11) note the schedule of Service Specific grants of £241.9 million contained within Appendix 2;
- (12) approve the schedule of recurrent pressures of £19.5 million that has been included within the Medium Term Financial Plan, detailed in Appendix 3;
- (13) approve the schedule of non-recurrent pressures of £2.1 million that has been included within the Medium Term Financial Plan, detailed in Appendix 4;
- (14) approve the use of £1.6 million from the Strategic Management Reserve to fund non-recurrent pressures in 2019-20, and £2.1 million over the period of the Medium Term Financial Plan;
- (15) approve the Inflation Schedule totalling £5.3 million detailed in Appendix 5;
- (16) approve the schedule of Growth and Commitments of £19.3 million detailed in Appendix 6;
- (17) approve the identified budget balancing measures contained in Appendix 7 of £12.8 million for 2019-20; and, £6.5 million for 2020-21; and £6.0 million for 2021-22. Also note and approve the additional requirement to identify and deliver further budget balancing measures of £5.2 million in 2020-21 and £5.8 million in 2021-22 in order to balance the budget;
- (18) note the 2019-20 budgets by service area detailed in Appendix 9;
- (19) note the Summary of the Reserves and Provisions contained within Appendix 10;
- (20) approve the use of £0.3 million from the General Fund in 2019-20;
- (21) note the overall reduction in the ring-fenced Dedicated Schools Grant of £19.72 million in 2019-20. This is a result of the expectation that fifteen schools will convert to academies during 2019-20;

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- (22) agree the Housing Revenue Account 2019-20 budget as detailed within Appendix 11, which will reduce the estimated balance on the HRA reserve from £27.4 million at 31 March 2018, to £14.9 million at 31 March 2024. This will fund a Housing Investment programme over the same period which will allow £22.5 million of new investment in council housing;
- (23) note that 2019-20 is the fourth and final year of a compulsory 1.0% reduction for Council tenants' rents and that the budget detailed in Appendix 11 assumes that rents will rise by CPI plus 1% from April 2020 in line with Government guidance;
- (24) note the indicative 30 year Housing Revenue Account business plan as detailed within Appendix 11;
- (25) note that the Government has removed the Housing Revenue Account borrowing cap on 29 October 2018 which will enable the Council to consider a new Housing Investment Programme without the constraints of the previous debt cap;
- (26) agree to refinance a maturing Housing Revenue Account loan of £15.3 million during 2019-20.
- (27) approve the Capital Strategy 2019-20 to 2021-22 contained within Appendix 12;
- (28) approve the delegation of the detail of the use of the Strategic Regeneration budget to the Council's Section 151 Officer, Executive Director of Place, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and the Cabinet Member for Economic Development.
- (29) approve the revised Capital Programme as detailed within Appendix 13; and, note the projects highlighted within the main body of the report which will complete after 2021-22;
- (30) approve the delegation of the detail of the final Local Transport Programme and any subsequent in year amendments to the Executive Director - Place and the Cabinet Member for Environment and Local Services;
- (31) agree delegation to Cabinet to approve individual projects which propose to utilise the flexibilities of capital receipts.
- (32) approve the Prudential Indicators based on the proposed Capital Programme detailed within Appendix 14;
- (33) approve the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy detailed in Appendix 15;

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(34) approve the proposed Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2019-20 detailed in Appendix 16;

(35) approve the Revenues and Benefits Policies for 2019-20 contained within Appendix 17 and note the proposed changes to the Council Tax Discount, Corporate Debt and Rate Relief policies in particular;

(36) approve the Pay Policy Statement for 2019-20 at Appendix 18;

(37) approve a delegation to amend the budget 2019-20 and Medium Term Financial Plan in light of any changes as a result of the final Local Government; and

(38) note the report of the Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC.

(2) Potential Loan to Alnwick Youth Hostel

The report provided details of a potential loan facility to Alnwick Youth Hostel for up to £100,000 for the repair and maintenance of the building (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).

Councillor Oliver introduced the report, highlighting the importance of the facility both to young people and the local tourism economy in Alnwick. The facility was well run, and the profit and loss account demonstrated the ability to make the loan repayments.

Councillor Homer felt that the business plan was reasonable and risks had been mitigated. The tourism perspective was an important one - Alnwick was a huge contributor to this, and an expanding accommodation offer was important to increase accessibility for all.

Councillor Wearmouth supported this. The planned work would bring the hostel up to a good standard and would help to make Alnwick open to everyone.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the contents of the report be noted;
- (b) the current risks associated with the loan which are contained within the report be noted;

- (c) the proposed loan terms and conditions, including the requirement for the signed lease agreement be noted;
- (d) it be noted that there is no loan security;
- (e) agreement be given in principle to the loan of £100,000 being granted, subject to 3 above; and
- (f) the report of the Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC be noted.

(3) Financial Performance 2018-19

The report informed the Cabinet of the current financial position for the Council against the Budget for 2018-19 (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix B).

Councillor Oliver advised that, overall, the financial picture was sound, with a projected £4.2m underspend in the budget. On savings targets of £8.2m, £6.8 had already been delivered, and £1.4m would be addressed by underspends. He detailed some of the key points of the report. The greatest pressures came from adults' and children's services, with a forecast overspend of £2.7m in purchased external adult social care, and a projected overspend of £3m in the out of county residential placements budget. However, the picture overall was positive.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the report be noted; and
- (b) the projected underspend of £4.2 million be noted.

85. REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

(1) The Outline Business Case for the replacement of school buildings for Hadrian Learning Trust schools

The report requested Cabinet's approval of the Outline Business Case (OBC) to provide new school buildings for Hexham Queen Elizabeth High School and Hexham Middle school.

An outline capital allocation for investment in Education has already been made within the Council's medium term capital programme. The Outline Business Case sought to confirm the estimate of capital required for the construction of the proposed scheme, being £37.1m (copy attached to the

signed minutes as Appendix C, along with the report of the FACS OSC circulated at the meeting).

The report was introduced by Councillor Daley, who provided some background to the current position. The proposed investment would result, not just in new school buildings, but in an asset for the community, including a conferencing centre and excellent sports facilities. This was an exciting project which had been subject to a rigorous business case. He also highlighted recommendation 4 in the report, which proposed the development of an OBC to evaluate options for investment in the Seaton Valley Federation of schools. Regarding the Scrutiny report, the highways infrastructure issue mentioned would be taken up by officers.

Mrs Aviston reported that the OBC was to prove the affordability and deliverability of the scheme and was just the first step in the procurement process. The timescale on this project was very tight, so there could be no delays if it was to be delivered by Sept 2021.

A number of comments were made by members including:-

- Councillor Homer was very happy to support this long overdue investment. Queen Elizabeth High School had just been recognised as the best performing high school in the County, which was a credit to the school given the state of the buildings. She was delighted that the Administration had listened to the case put forward by members and parents and felt sure that the development would be a major bonus for the community as well as pupils at the school.
- Councillor Sanderson commented that the Cabinet fully supported the lead being taken by Councillor Daley on education in the County and he was delighted that both projects were being taken forward. He also paid tribute to all involved at the school for suffering the years of decay and decline in the learning environment.
- Councillor Oliver commented that these were exciting developments for an excellent school which had been through some challenging times. The capital investment would allow a better revenue position to be reached, and the new sports facilities were particularly welcomed.
- Councillor Wearmouth welcomed both of the developments, which were long overdue following years of neglect. The Authority had missed out previously, but these projects were being supported by funding from the Government totalling around £11m.
- The Leader commented that a problem with educational standards across the County had now been recognised at a strategic level. Action taken to address this was already being reflected in national league tables.

- Councillor Riddle commented that the quality of schools was a major factor in influencing relocation, and the quality of both buildings and standards were important to that. He fully supported the proposals.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the allocation of £37.1m capital funding, subject to full Council approval on 20 February 2019 in the Council's medium term financial plan 2019-2022 to deliver the scheme to provide new school buildings for Hexham Queen Elizabeth High School and Hexham Middle School, both of which form part of Hadrian Learning Trust (HLT), be noted. The scheme is planned to be completed by September 2021;
- (b) subject to full Council approval of the project, approval be given to the commencement of procurement using a Design and Build Procurement strategy in order to deliver the project through a competitive dialogue process which would begin on 25 February 2019 with the publication of the OJEU notice;
- (c) the Final Business Case be approved by Cabinet prior to the award of contract to the preferred contractor in the summer term of 2019, following the procurement process as set out in the Outline Business Case within Appendix 1 of the report;
- (d) approval be given to the development of an Outline Business Case to evaluate the options for capital investment in the Seaton Valley Federation of schools; and
- (e) the report of the FACS OSC be noted.

(2) School Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for the 2020/21 Academic Year

The report informed Cabinet of the outcomes of the consultation on School Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for the 2020/21 Academic Year as required by the School Admissions Code 2014. Approval (determination) of these admission arrangements was also sought. It also requested permission from Cabinet to undertake informal consultation on proposed accommodation expansions at Horton Grange Primary School, New Delaval Primary School and Whytrig Community Middle School to provide additional pupil places in the light of increasing births and housebuilding in Blyth and the Seaton Delaval area (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix D, along with the report of the FACS OSC circulated at the meeting).

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Councillor Daley reported that there had been no challenge from the consultation process. He highlighted recommendation 5 which sought approval to begin consultation on expanding accommodation at various schools which had been identified as needing additional capacity.

Members felt this demonstrated the Administration's understanding of the impact of new build developments on communities. £11m had been secured since a policy change had been implemented to leverage funding from such developments.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the outcomes of the six week consultation undertaken in relation to the Council's proposed admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools for 2020/21 that took place between 20th November 2018 and 15th January 2019 be noted;
- (b) the proposed co-ordinated admission scheme for all maintained schools and academies, as provided in Appendix 1 of the report be approved;
- (c) the proposed admission arrangements, including proposed oversubscription criteria and proposed admission numbers for First and Primary community and voluntary and controlled schools, be approved (determined) as provided in Appendix 2 of the report;
- (d) the proposed admission arrangements, including proposed oversubscription criteria and proposed admission numbers, for Middle, High and Secondary community and voluntary controlled schools, including sixth forms, be approved (determined) as provided in Appendix 3 of the report;
- (e) the commencement of informal consultation on expanding the accommodation at Horton Grange and New Delaval Primary Schools, and Whytrig Community Middle School as a result of increasing pupil numbers in Blyth and Seaton Delaval be approved; and
- (f) the report of the FACS OSC be noted.

(3) Charges for Care and Support Services for Adults

The report advised on comments received during the recent consultation about proposed changes to the Council's charging policy for care and support services, and asked Cabinet to make recommendations to the

Council about what changes to approve (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix E).

Councillor Jones advised that this was a major piece of work which had undergone a statutory consultation. The savings would form part of the 2019-20 Budget.

Neil Bradley took members through the detail of the report, highlighting the specific issues for members to consider. The main changes proposed were detailed in recommendations 4-9.

Councillor Sanderson commented that this was a very serious issue which had been under consideration for some time. He sought assurances that there would be sufficient capacity within the system to deal with the additional queries when the new system was implemented. Neil confirmed that extra resource would be put into the existing support system to deal with the queries and initial assessments.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the contents of the report be noted; and
- (b) Council at its budget meeting on 20 February, be recommended:
 - 1. To consider the contents of the report on comments made during the consultation, attached as Appendix A;
 - 2. To consider the equality impact assessment, attached as Appendix B;
 - 3. To consider the detailed advice provided in the report, and advice from the Care Act statutory guidance cited in the report
 - 4. To reduce to £35 the standard allowance for disability-related costs for people getting the highest rates of the main non-means-tested disability benefits;
 - 5. To adopt the minimum income figures for members of a couple set out in national regulations, but capping the additional charge for working age adults at a figure calculated on the same basis as the figure of £19.45 quoted in the consultation document (adjusted as necessary for changes in the nationally prescribed minimum income figures);
 - 6. To adopt a policy that charges for home care will take account of the full cost to the Council of the person's service, up to the limit of what the person is assessed as able to afford to pay, with the

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exceptions set out in this report for the “very rural” areas of Northumberland and for other special circumstances;

7. To decide in principle that all social care day services should from 1 October 2019 be charged for on the basis of their full cost, up to the limit of what each person is assessed as able to afford to pay, including those services operated by the mental health organisation Blyth Star which are currently not chargeable but are similar in nature to other services which are; and to delegate to the Executive Director, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adult Wellbeing & Health, the authority to determine what Blyth Star services should be exceptions to this, because charging would undermine the nature of the support which they offer;

8. To end the discount currently offered to service users who pay by Direct Debit, and to introduce in its place an introductory offer for new charge-payers of a discount of £10 on their first three bills;

9. To introduce a weekly administration fee for people who choose to ask the Council to arrange services for them when they have savings of more than the capital limit (currently £23,250), and would be able to make private arrangements. This fee to be based on the actual administrative costs, and initially set at £3.45, or £4.00 for people not paying by Direct Debit. The discount for payment by Direct Debit provided for in the previous recommendation will not be available where a person is paying an administration fee;

10. To confirm that all income above the minimum amounts provided for in regulations will continue to be treated as available to pay charges, other than where there are specific exceptions in the Council’s policy;

11. To confirm that there will continue to be no maximum weekly charge;

12. To confirm, after considering the advice from the Care Act statutory guidance quoted in section 9 of the report, and the reasoning set out in that section, that carers should continue to be charged on the same basis as disabled people for any services provided directly to meet their own needs; and

13. To adopt the charging policy attached as Appendix C, to take effect from 8 April 2019.

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86. REPORTS OF THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PLACE

(1) Review of Waste Strategy - Kerbside Collection of Household Waste

The report outlined the modelling and options appraisal work undertaken in 2018 in order to review and update the Council's Municipal Waste Management Strategy 2003 - 2020. The modelling work evaluates the current kerbside collection service delivered to Northumberland residents, and identifies and evaluates alternative approaches in order to 'shortlist' options for further, more detailed modelling and evaluation (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix F, along with the report of the Communities and Place OSC circulated at the meeting).

Councillor Sanderson reported that this was an exciting opportunity which would help to improve recycling rates, hopefully up to 50% over the term of the strategy. The improvements outlined were not easy or cheap, but there were options detailed in the report which were affordable and should be popular with residents.

- Councillor Jones supported the proposals for kerbside glass recycling, which had previously been very popular with Castle Morpeth Borough Council residents. She also welcomed the proposal for food recycling but queried the effect of the garden waste collection proposal within the Strategy. Councillor Sanderson replied that it was hoped not to have any effect. This would need to be subject to future negotiation so was not yet built into the plans.
- Councillor Oliver queried whether there was more that could be done to encourage people to compost their own food waste.
- Councillor Riddle commented that glass recycling was popular with the public and should be progressed. He suggested that the public would also like to see more advisory labels on the bins to assist with what could be recycled.
- The Leader commented that the environment was now much more in public focus and the Administration was committed to raising awareness of what happened to plastic in the environment as part of its overall strategy.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the key findings of the waste service modelling work that had been undertaken to date be noted;

- (b) the selection of the preferred options that will go forward to the next stage of more detailed modelling and evaluation be approved, namely:-
- option 2c : four weekly glass collections with the option of introducing plastic Pots Tubs & Trays as well as food waste collections at a later date so that at least a 50% recycling rate is achieved, and
 - option 4 : kerbside sort (multi-stream) recycling with food collections.
- (c) slippage of £14,000 from the anticipated year end underspend within Local Services be approved and the £21,000 funding contribution from WRAP be accepted in order to fund the overall cost of £35,000 associated with undertaking the further modelling and evaluation work;
- (d) an audit be undertaken to identify measures to cut paper consumption and improve paper recycling, as well as removing the use of single-use plastics where possible to do so, thereby demonstrating that the Council is leading by example and;
- (e) the report of the Communities and Place OSC be noted.

(2) Proposed Introduction of Charges at Tourism and Railway Station Car Parks - Consultation Response

The report provided feedback on the outcome of the consultation exercise regarding the proposed increase to some existing car parking charges and introduction of parking charges at selected tourism/coastal, railway station car parks and at Tyne Riverside Country Park car park in Prudhoe. The report summarised the main issues raised during the consultation exercise and the Council's response to those issues and made recommendations for refinements to the proposals in light of the consultation feedback (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix G, along with the report of the Communities and Place OSC circulated at the meeting).

Councillor Sanderson was pleased to report that a genuine consultation had been undertaken, with proposals amended at Cresswell, Blyth and Prudhoe in light of responses made. However, the investment programmes would be continued. Blyth in particular was in real need of investment and funding had been allocated for the coming year.

Members commended Councillor Sanderson and the staff for the work which had gone into this. It was commented that genuine consultation led to good outcomes for communities, and that a good balance had been achieved which would improve tourism, without over developing some of the most beautiful areas of the County. Pragmatic solutions had been found and charges would allow investment in additional spaces, thereby providing extra capacity for more people to use the train.

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- (a) the main issues raised from the consultation exercise be noted;
- (b) the amended proposals be approved as detailed in Appendix A i.e.:-
 - a. withdraw the proposals to introduce charges at Haltwhistle Rail Station, Prudhoe Rail Station, Tyne Riverside Country Park, Cresswell, Blyth and Seaton Sluice car parks, and;
 - b. amend some of the tariff structures at the remaining car parks where new charges will still be implemented, in order to take into account feedback received during the consultation exercise;
- (c) the allocation of £27,000 capital funding be approved from the 'Invest to Save' reserve, required to implement the proposals;
- (d) the following policy statement on car parking be approved, namely that *'The County Council will maintain its policy of free parking in main town centres to support the local economy. However, the County Council will introduce car parking charges at tourism/visitor coastal car parks and at railway station car parks where appropriate to do so, in order to help manage the high demand in these locations, make the management and maintenance of these facilities more financially sustainable and to generate income that will assist in financing future investment in parking services. Where significant capital investment is required to support the provision of additional car parking capacity, the Council will also consider whether or not there is a need for car parking charges in the project business case, as part of the decision making process for its capital investment; and*
- (e) the report of the Communities and Place OSC be noted.

(3) Northumberland Line Develop Stage - Finance

The report provided Cabinet with:

- An update on progress in relation to the reintroduction of passenger services along the rail line between Ashington and Newcastle;
- Detail on the scope and cost of the next stage of the project and how this can be funded (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix H).

Councillor Wearmouth reported back on a successful visit by the Minister for Transport the previous week which had involved a trip along the Northumberland Line. He was hopeful that the Authority would be successful in securing £10m in funding from the North East's Transforming

Cities Fund (TCF). Mr Johnson confirmed that the initiative was moving towards a positive conclusion with bids being put in now. Officers were working to make the plans deliverable and members would be kept updated.

The Leader commented the TCF provided a unique opportunity to deliver an extremely important project, just in the area where it was needed. The Government was expected to make a decision in the Autumn and he was confident that the Authority could deliver a good business case to be successful.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) current progress on the project be noted;
- (b) approval be given to progress of the project to the next stage of development through the RNEP Process – i.e. *Stage 2: Develop Stage*;
- (c) Council be requested to approve the cost of the feasibility work of approximately £3.46 million (including the costs for Network Rail), to be funded from balances to be determined by the Section 151 Officer; and
- (d) it be noted that any subsequent contribution from DfT as part of the RNEP process will be utilised to reduce the Council's contribution.

87. REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Acomb Neighbourhood Plan

The report sought approval to formally 'make' the Acomb Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan passed independent examination on the 10 October 2018. A local referendum held in the Parish of Acomb on 10 January 2019 returned a majority vote in favour of using the Plan to make decisions on planning applications. The Council was now obliged by statute to make the Neighbourhood Plan unless it considers that doing so would breach European Union obligations (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix I).

Councillor Riddle reported this was the ninth Neighbourhood Plan to reach this stage, and had received overwhelming support of 93% at referendum.

Members again acknowledged the tremendous amount of work which had gone into producing the Plan by the local community, including the Parish Council and local County Councillor.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the referendum outcome of 10 January 2019 be noted;
- (b) Cabinet agree to formally 'make' the Acomb Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with section 38A(4)(a) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004;
- (c) the decision statement (attached at Appendix 1) required under Regulation 19 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 as amended be approved; and
- (d) both the Acomb Neighbourhood Plan and the decision statement be published on the Council's website and publicised elsewhere in order to bring it to the attention of people who live, work or carry out business in the neighbourhood area; and the decision statement be sent to the qualifying body and anyone else who asked to be notified of the decision.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....