

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

At a meeting of the **Cabinet** held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Morpeth on Tuesday 11 June 2019 at 10.00am.

PRESENT

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

CABINET MEMBERS

Homer, C.
Oliver, N.
Riddle, J.

Sanderson, H.G.H.
Wearmouth, R.

OTHER MEMBERS

Bawn, D.
Bowman, L.
Crosby, B.
Dodd, R.
Flux, B.

Gallacher, B.
Grimshaw, L.
Moore, R.
Wallace, R.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Angus, K.
Bradley, N.
Hadfield, K.
Henry, L.
Johnson, P.
Lally, D.
McEvoy-Carr, C.
Roll, J.
Scholes, A.

Executive Director HR/OD and
Deputy Chief Executive
Service Director – Strategic
Commissioning and Finance
Committee Services and Scrutiny
Manager
Legal Services Manager
Interim Executive Director of Place
Chief Executive
Executive Director of Adult Social
Care and Children's Services
Democratic Services Manager
Interim Executive Director of
Finance

Three members of the press and public were in attendance.

Ch.'s Initials.....

6. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Daley and Jones.

7. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 24 May 2019, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

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

(1) Proposal and Rationale for Changes to Morpeth Children's Centre

The report provided members with an overview of the context of the proposal and rationale for changes to the use of the current Morpeth children's centre building; assurances that children's centre service delivery would not be reduced as a result; demonstrated that the proposal added capacity to the provision available to support education for children with Special Educational Needs in Northumberland; and proposed a timeline for the statutorily required public consultation for changing the use of the children's centre building to allow it to be ready as an education facility from September 2019 if this was agreed (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix A, along with the report of the Family and Children's Services OSC circulated at the meeting).

The Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services stressed that this was not a closure or reduction in service, just a transfer of location. Funding had been identified within the Special Provision Capital Fund for Pupils with EHC Plans to replace the roof, which would enable continued use by Action for Children, who had negotiated with the next door Stobhill First School to deliver the Learning Together Through Play group. It would also provide additional capacity to Collingwood Special School, in line with current policy to increase provision, and discussions were ongoing with the Headteacher regarding future options for this.

Statutory guidance required a public consultation on the deregistering of the building as a children's centre. This would begin in June, and responses collated in time to allow a final decision to be made before the new school term in Sept 2019.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) members accept and agree the report, understanding that the direct childrens centre service delivery will not be changed as a result of the proposal;
- (b) members agree with the suggestion to utilise the building to support additional education provision for children with SEN. This will be funded through funding as set out in the 'Expansion of school spaces at Collingwood School' which was approved at Capital Strategy Group on 10th May 2019;
- (c) members agree the proposed time frame and method of public consultation; and
- (d) the report of the Family and Children's Services OSC be noted.

(2) Adult Services Market Position Statement

The report presented the Adult Services Market Position Statement (MPS) for Care and Support, revised following public consultation (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix B, along with the report of the Health and Wellbeing OSC circulated at the meeting).

Councillor Homer introduced the report in Councillor Jones' absence. The Local Authority had a duty under the Care Act to support the market in services for meeting care and support needs, to make sure that its residents, whether or not their support was funded by the local authority, had a choice of providers and of high quality services. Authorities had to consider both the current and likely future demand for services, the sustainability of the market, and how to foster continuous improvement and innovation.

To fulfil this duty, local authorities had to produce a "Market Position Statement" to set out to the market as a whole the likely need to extend or expand services, to encourage new organisations to the market, or if appropriate, to signal likely decreases in needs. The report set out the type and level of care Northumberland would need. The draft Market Position Statement had been subject to wide consultation and a number of events had been held with current care providers and housing providers.

The Service Director advised that this was a statutory requirement. Consultation had taken place between May and August of last year. The feedback had been generally positive with some minor amendments made as a result. The key issues were:-

- Developing more housing schemes to help support people to remain independent for as long as possible and reduce the number of people needing care home accommodation.

- Improving autism services.
- Opportunities to bid for contracts to deliver services
- Plans to commission new day services and support for carers.

It was important to note that this report was directed more towards providers than to client groups.

Councillor Moore presented the report of the Health and Wellbeing OSC. Members of the Committee had been impressed with the level of detail in the report and the measures identified to address the challenges facing the local authority. They had supported the report's recommendations.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the revised Market Position Statement be ratified and its publication be agreed; and
- (b) the report of the Health and Wellbeing OSC be noted.

9. REPORT OF THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

Write Offs 2018-19

The report presented information on debt written off during the 2018-19 financial year (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix C).

Councillor Oliver presented this annual report on debts written off. The level of write offs had remained fairly static in the last couple of years and he assured members that all possible action was taken to recover debts before they were written off. He highlighted some of the areas of write offs, including council tax, business rates and benefit overpayments, and advised that the overall provision for bad debts had risen by around 3%.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted.

10. REPORTS OF THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PLACE

(1) Devolution of the Adult Education Budget to the North of Tyne Combined Authority

The report outlined the legal process to secure the devolution of the Adult Education Budget (AEB) to the North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) for the academic year 2020/21 onwards (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix D).

The Executive Director informed members that a key element of the Combined Authority vision was the devolution of this budget, and would allow the NoT CA to have a greater focus on its priorities. This was a technical report which members were asked support to allow matters to progress.

The Leader commented that businesses in Northumberland felt there were not sufficiently skilled employees in the area to match the jobs they had available. People needed to be able to access training for more than one career in a lifetime, which was now more common place in the current economic climate. The devolution of this budget would enable the Authority to set its own agenda to ensure that the required training opportunities were available.

Councillor Oliver queried whether this would enable the quality of adult education service to be raised and the Leader confirmed that the NoT CA would be able to hold colleges and providers to account. Councillor Oliver also queried whether there would be a focus on digital skills and the Leader confirmed that there would be a focus on practical skills for all ages.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the Council consent to the making of the order which will transfer the functions relating to AEB from the Secretary of State (SoS) to the NTCA;
- (b) the Chief Executive be authorised to provide written confirmation of the Council's consent when requested by the SoS; and
- (c) the report of the Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC be noted.

(2) Responding to Climate Change

The report sought Cabinet approval to the Council's draft Statement of Intent in response to declaring a climate change emergency and agreement to the next steps in developing a subsequent action plan (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix E).

The Leader introduced the report, highlighting that this was a really important change of direction for the Authority. The Council was responsible for all of Northumberland and members had a moral duty to ensure that it was left in a better state than they found it. The Administration was taking this issue very seriously and making it clear to the next generation that they wanted to make a difference in how things were taken forward. He challenged all residents and businesses to think about their impact on the climate. The Authority was committed to being carbon neutral by 2025 - this was a significant challenge and the Authority had not been active enough in improving recycling rates,

which had been stuck at 40% for some time. He gave a commitment to improving this by 10% in the next year or so.

Councillor Sanderson endorsed all of these comments. This was of paramount importance for the whole of the County and deserved being referred to as a “climate emergency.” A number of initiatives had already taken place, such as increasing the number of electric vehicle charging points and measures to improve recycling rates, and he promised more would be done as he knew it was an issue all members felt very strongly about.

The Executive Director drew members’ attention to the main points of the report, which outlined the significant progress which had been made since 2010, and detailed plans to drive the initiative forward. It also detailed the role of the Council in acting as a community leader and place shaper, which was the most important element of all. He highlighted some of the commitments contained within the Statement of Intent, adding that as a large rural geographical area, the Council faced significant challenges so had to be realistic in its targets. The report was not just about making a commitment, but also about backing this up with an action plan.

Councillor Sanderson commented that the action plan would be drawn up to meet some of the targets, and this should be ready by Christmas. The steering group would be expanded to include representatives from partner organisations, and there would be reports to Scrutiny and Cabinet in due course. He also thanked the staff for their efforts in pulling this work together.

Councillor Oliver commended Councillor Sanderson for showing real leadership on this issue so that the Council could get its own house in order. He referred to the Catapult for Offshore Renewable Energy (CORE) at Blyth and the development of the Northumberland Line as clear indicators of the Council’s intended way forward.

Councillor Dodd commented that he would like to see more initiatives for hydro-electric power as the County had the ideal topography to support this.

Councillor Wearmouth commented that it was easy for Cabinet to support the statement of intent as the County was very reliant on the climate for its economy, and the Council had a good track record already in helping to combat climate change. There was also an opportunity for the Council to assist its neighbouring authorities to “green up” their act, particularly in NoT, though it was not easy to find ways to take carbon out of the atmosphere in city areas.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:-

- (a) acknowledges the significant progress made to date by the Council in responding to climate change;
- (b) agrees to declare a climate emergency;
- (c) commits to halving the carbon footprint of the County Council by 2025, with this target being kept under annual review with the ambition of continually improving its pace and scale;
- (d) pledges to work with the Government to make Northumberland carbon neutral by 2030 whilst appreciating that this will require a concerted national shift in behaviours and significant technological advancements;
- (e) produces a comprehensive and costed Action Plan for the next 3 years that clearly demonstrates the initial phase of delivery by which the Council will meet its above carbon reduction management commitment and work toward the wider carbon neutrality pledge;
- (f) maintains oversight of delivery through regular progress reporting and the full engagement of the cross-party Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- (g) agrees to expand the existing officer Climate Change Steering Group responsible for developing and delivering the Action Plan to include representation from other relevant partner organisations;
- (h) maintains the Council's leadership in responding to climate change with the suite of tangible, practical actions being complemented within the Action Plan with clear steps aimed at:
 - raising staff awareness as to the importance of this agenda and the changes it will bring to how we currently operate; and
 - defining how best to engage the wider community in its ongoing development and delivery.

11. 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 at its meeting held on 10 May 2019 (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix F).

(1) HRA Capital Delivery

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the development of proposals of up to £10 million in 2019-20 to pursue and support the broad range of capital activities set out in the report be approved;
- (b) it be noted that should the actual spend exceed the £2 million currently identified in the approved 2019-20 capital programme, there would need to be a re-profiling of future years' budgets and Cabinet would receive a further report; and,
- (c) the proposed scheme of delegation for spend approvals relating to the delivery of these plans be approved.

(2) Alnwick Lindisfarne Site

Members welcomed the proposals for investment in adult learning at the site, rather than it being sold off to a developer. Other strategic uses of the site would be brought forward. It also demonstrated how well the local forums were working in partnership with the Council.

RESOLVED that the associated budget requirement of £1,191,735 for the consolidation of the site and refurbishment of the annex building, to be met from the Property Stewardship provision with the current Capital programme, be approved.

(3) Special Provision Capital Fund and Collingwood Special School

RESOLVED that an increase in the Council's Capital programme to include the grant award as detailed in paragraph 8.1 of £848,837 from the DfE for the Special Provisions Capital Fund be approved, and an allocation of £200,000 in 2019-20 to refurbish the former Children's Centre and Collingwood Special School be approved.

12. NOMINATIONS TO ADVANCE NORTHUMBERLAND

Cabinet was asked to consider the nomination of a member from both the Labour Group and the Bedlington Independent Group to the Board of Advance Northumberland, and the nomination of Councillor Dunbar in place of Councillor Daley, who had recently resigned.

RESOLVED that Councillors Dungworth and Robinson be nominated as Board Directors, and Councillor Dunbar be nominated as a Director in place of Councillor Daley.

13. 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 outweighed the public interest in disclosure for the following reasons:-

| Agenda Item | Paragraph of Part I of Schedule 12A |
|--------------------|--|
| 11(1) | 3 - 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 outweighs the interest in disclosure as the Council would not be able to secure value for money for the public purse if it were to disclose the expenditure proposed to be incurred by the authority for the supply of goods or services in advance of the main works contract procurement exercise being undertaken. |
| 11(2) | 3 - 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 outweighs the interest in disclosure because the Council may lose the opportunity to secure an anchor tenant for the project if the terms of the contract are made public. |

14. REPORTS OF THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PLACE

(1) Union Chain Bridge Project - Progress Update and Funding Allocation

Cabinet was asked to consider a report on the above (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix G, coloured pink and marked “Not for Publication”).

RESOLVED that recommendations 1-5 as detailed in the report, be approved.

(2) Grant to Advance Northumberland for Bedlington Town Centre

The report proposed an amendment to the Council’s Capital Programme (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix H, coloured pink and marked “Not for Publication”).

Members were reminded about the need for strict confidentiality to be maintained.

RESOLVED that the recommendations detailed in paragraph 2 of the report be approved.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....