

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

At a meeting of the **Cabinet** held in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Morpeth on Tuesday 9 July 2019 at 10.00am.

PRESENT

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

CABINET MEMBERS

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

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

OTHER MEMBERS

Bawn, D.
Bowman, L.
Dodd, R.
Dunbar, C.

Flux, B.
Gallacher, B.
Grimshaw, L.
Watson, J.G.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Angus, K.

Bradley, N.

Hadfield, K.

Jackson, D.

Johnson, P.

Lally, D.

Lancaster, H.

McEvoy-Carr, C.

Executive Director HR/OD and
Deputy Chief Executive

Service Director – Strategic
Commissioning and Finance
Committee Services and Scrutiny
Manager

Service Director, Education and
Skills

Interim Executive Director of Place
Chief Executive

Principal Solicitor

Executive Director of Adult Social
Care and Children's Services

Ch.'s Initials.....

Seven members of the press and public were in attendance.

15. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 11 June 2019, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

16. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

Councillors Jackson and Wearmouth disclosed personal interests in item 9 on the agenda (Advance Northumberland Limited) as directors of Advance, and advised that they would leave the room whilst the matter was discussed). Councillor Daley advised that he had now formally resigned as a director.

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

(1) Outcomes of Consultation on a proposal to extend the age ranges of Whitley Memorial CE and West End First Schools

The report set out the results and analysis of the informal consultation process undertaken by the Council at the request of the Governing Bodies of West End and Whitley Memorial First Schools on a proposal to extend the age ranges of the schools with effect from 1 September 2020. The request of the Governing Bodies of the two schools was in turn prompted by the proposal of the Governing Body of Meadowdale Middle Academy to become a primary school with effect from 1 September 2020. The report also includes a request to Cabinet to permit the publication of a Statutory Proposal (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix A).

Councillor Daley introduced the report, highlighting that this had come about as a result of a request from the schools' governing bodies.

Mrs Aviston reported to members that there had been 205 responses to the informal consultation. 82% of the West End First School consultees who responded were in favour of the proposal to extend the age range. 70% of the Whitley Memorial First School consultees who responded were in favour of the proposal to extend the age range. Amendments had been made to the proposals in light of the informal consultation by way of a reduction from 1.5 to 1 form entry for each year group, which was supported by the Diocese. The reasons for this were detailed in the report. West End First School Governing Body had also indicated that they would like the age range extended downwards so the school could become a 3-11 primary school. However, as there was already pre-school provision at the school and more

than sufficient early years provision in this part of Bedlington, it was felt that there was already ample choice of early years support for parents..

In response to a question, Mrs Aviston confirmed that the Bedlington Partnership currently had the fourth highest number of surplus places in the County at 33% and a report would be coming to members in due course to address this.

Councillor Daley commented on the effect of academy decisions on maintained schools, which then had to look at their ability to survive in the light of those decisions. He felt there was a need for more intelligent thinking about how the Authority worked with all schools going forward.

It was noted that the Family and Children's Services OSC had supported the recommendations.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) Cabinet note the analysis of the consultation, which took place between 23 April and 12 June 2019;
- (b) in the light of the report and recommendations from the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee approval be given to the publication of a statutory proposal on 11 July 2019, setting out the intention of the County Council to implement the following proposals:
 - Extend the age range of West End First School from a 2 form entry (Planned Admission Number - 60), age 4 to 9 first school to become a 1 form entry (Planned Admission Number - 30), age 4 to 11 primary school with effect from 1 September 2020, noting that the reduction in the PAN would be applicable to Reception class from that date onwards;
 - Extend the age range of Whitley Memorial CE First School from a 1.8 form entry (Planned Admission - 54), age 3 to 9 first school to become a 1 form entry (Planned Admission Number - 30), age 3 to 11 primary school with effect from 1 September 2020, noting that the reduction in the PAN would be applicable to Reception class from that date onwards;
- (c) the indicative budget for capital funding outlined at para. 43 of the report be noted and it be noted that the funding for the works required will be allocated from the School Capital Maintenance Grant Fund 2019/2020 allocation; the additional work on establishing deliverability

and a definitive budget for the preferred building options be approved, and it be noted that no additional funding is required, the cost to be met from the School Capital Maintenance Grant Fund 2019/2020 allocation;

- (d) the implications for Home to School Transport set out in the report be noted;
- (e) it be noted that the outcomes of the consultation, following publication of the Statutory Proposals, will be brought back to Cabinet in September 2019 for a final decision to be taken in relation to the proposals; and
- (f) the report of the FACS OSC be noted.

(2) Update of School Organisation Plan and other school organisation matters

In June 2018, Cabinet approved the publication of the School Organisation Plan 2018-2021 for Northumberland. It was agreed that the plan would be subject to an update on an annual basis in order to include the latest data and information on schools relevant to school place planning, and Cabinet was now asked to approve the updated version of the plan for publication.

The report also set out other school organisation matters requiring Cabinet approval. These related to:

- following completion of informal consultation approved by Cabinet in February 2019, a request for approval to publish a statutory proposal to make permanent the expansion of the capacities at Whytrig Middle School in the Seaton Valley Partnership, and Horton Grange and New Delaval Primary Schools in the Blyth and Bede Partnerships;
- The request from the federated Governing Body of Otterburn First and West Woodburn First Schools, to expand the age range of West Woodburn First school to a 4-11 primary school. If approved this would result in the publication of a statutory proposal to expand the age range of West Woodburn First School in the Haydon Bridge Partnership following extensive informal and formal consultation on the structure and management of the school in 2018 and early 2019;
- The request of the Governing Body of Mowbray Primary School, to carry out consultation in line with the Admissions Code on a proposal to reduce the Planned Admission Number (PAN) of Mowbray Primary School in the Bedlington Partnership from 45 to 30 with effect from September 2020 as a result of falling pupil numbers in the school's catchment area (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix B, along with the report of the FACS OSC circulated at the meeting).

Councillor Daley highlighted the main changes arising from the report. It was noted that the report had been considered by FACs OSC, which had supported the recommendations.

RESOLVED that:-

(a) Cabinet note:

- that the School Organisation Plan 2018-2021 has been updated with the latest data and information for 2019, as agreed by Cabinet in June 2018, to reflect changed data and school circumstances over the last 12 months and known changes in the near future.
- that the updated School Organisation Plan will be circulated to schools and other partners for comment before publication in September 2019 if approved;
- the feedback received from the informal consultation on the proposals to make permanent the expansion of the capacity of the buildings at Whytrig Middle School and Horton Grange and New Delaval Primary Schools;
- that the request submitted by the Federated Governing Body of Otterburn and West Woodburn First Schools for Cabinet for approval to publish a proposal to expand the age range of West Woodburn First School would align the school with the primary/secondary system that will be prevalent in the Haydon Bridge Partnership from September 2019.
- that the request of the Governing Body of Mowbray First School for Cabinet approval to consult on the reduction of its PAN has arisen as a result of continuing falling pupil numbers in the school catchment area.

(b) Cabinet approve:

- the publication of the updated School Organisation Plan 2018-2021 in September 2019 (subject to comment as noted in Recommendation 1);
- the publication of statutory proposals to make permanent the expansion of the school building capacities at Whytrig Middle School, Horton Grange Primary and New Delaval Primary Schools;
- the publication of a statutory proposal to expand the age range of West Woodburn First School from an age 4-9 first school to an age 4-11 primary school with effect from September 2020 to bring it into line with the prevalent primary/secondary system in place across the Haydon Bridge Partnership from September 2019.
- the commencement of consultation in line with the Admissions Code 2014 on a proposal to reduce the PAN of Mowbray Primary School in the Bedlington Partnership from 45 to 30, to take effect from September 2020; and

(c) the report of the FACS OSC be noted.

18. REPORT OF THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PLACE

Blyth Relief Road

The report provided Cabinet with:

- An overview of progress to date on the development of the business case for a new relief road for Blyth;
- A recommendation for the preferred route for more detailed development based on the outcome of appraisal to date and an extensive stakeholder consultation exercise;
- An update on the emerging opportunity to fund the scheme as part of the Major Road Network (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix C, along with the report of the CSEG OSC circulated at the meeting).

Councillor Wearmouth presented the report highlighting the main points and the longstanding need for action to be taken. Consultation had been done on a number of options, with 59% of respondents supporting the Council's preferred route of option 3. The current cost estimate of the preferred route was £22.213m and this demonstrated very high value for money with a cost benefit ratio of 4.91. The County Council contribution was £3.332m in match funding to support the Major Road Network National Roads Fund application. He then detailed the key milestones of the programme which were contained in the report.

The Leader referred to the lack of capacity in the current transport network and the adverse effect of the congestion on economic growth and the movement of people and goods, particularly to the Port of Blyth, and also to the harmful effect on the environment of exhaust emissions. The town was a real economic powerhouse for the area and this had never been properly recognised. Planning permission had previously been granted for thousands of homes with little thought given to the effects on local infrastructure, including roads and schools. However, this was now being addressed by the Administration, and the need for the relief road had been very clearly demonstrated by the value for money assessment.

Councillor Daley echoed these comments, adding that a report in 2015 had identified the need for action but nothing had been done. The number of employees at the Port would soon be increasing from 500 to 2000 and there were other economic developments in progress. Business needed to be able

to move freely around the area so that the fantastic opportunities which were available could be exploited.

Councillor Sanderson commented that Blyth had great potential but little had been done in the past to inject money or confidence into the area. The Council had a responsibility to get on with this and to make the opportunities available successful and exciting.

Councillor Oliver highlighted some of the projects which the Administration had progressed, such as the Northumberland Line, the Port of Blyth, developments in Ashington, a Future High Streets Fund application and Bedlington Town Centre regeneration. The Administration could not be accused of a lack of focus in the south east of the County.

Councillor Bawn presented the Scrutiny report. The Committee had been impressed with the work to date and had supported option 3. The Committee had acknowledged that the value for money ratio was still very high, taking into account the difficulties which needed to be overcome. It was felt to be a great investment for Blyth and the wider area.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the progress of the project to date be noted;
- (b) Route 3 be confirmed as the preferred route to take forward to detailed design and planning;
- (c) the costs and programme for taking the scheme forward as detailed in paragraphs 14-19 be noted;
- (d) the proposed match funding totalling £3.332m to support the Major Road Network (MRN) National Roads Fund application be approved; and
- (e) the report of the CSEG OSC be noted.

19. REPORT OF THE RETURNING OFFICER

Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2019

The report advised Cabinet about the commencement of the review of polling districts and polling places and asked it to note the terms of reference of the review (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix D).

Mrs Angus presented the report as the Returning Officer. The review was a statutory requirement to ensure that polling places and polling stations met set criteria and changing needs, and a full review had to be done every five

years. A final report would be submitted to Council in November with any changes identified from the review.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the commencement of the Review as set out in the report be noted; and
- (b) the Terms of Reference as set out in Appendix 1 of the report be noted.

20. REPORT OF THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - IMPROVING HEALTH AND FITNESS TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The report presented the findings of the Task and Finish Group to Cabinet for consideration. The Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed at their meeting on 4 June 2019 to recommend the findings to Cabinet for agreement (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix E).

This was presented by the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing OSC, Councillor Watson. He highlighted that this work had taken some time to complete, and as a result, he acknowledged that some of the report's recommended changes had already been introduced. No major issues of concern had been identified, but the working group would continue to meet a couple of times a year to maintain a watching brief.

Councillor Homer commented positively on this example of well organised and constructive scrutiny. She felt it was a testament to how far Active Northumberland (AN) had come as an organisation, and demonstrated how open and transparent they were. She welcomed the points in support of AN but felt there was some misunderstanding of the functions and remit of AN and the County Council, and also Northumberland Sport in terms of where responsibility lay. Regarding request 1(f) and the provision of community activities, she advised that a lot of work was done here but it needed to be on a targeted, area by area basis. Regarding request 1(g) and coordination with AN to support and promote leisure and fitness activities, Councillor Homer advised that the County Council and AN had already recorded active referrals in the last two years. She suggested that the Task and Finish Group report be passed on to the AN Board, Northumberland Sport and the Sports Development Team for their comments.

With regard to the Exercise Referral Scheme, Councillor Jones paid tribute to AN about their willingness to deliver better outcomes in this area which was really refreshing.

Councillor Sanderson agreed with Councillor Homer's comments on the work of Scrutiny, which he felt had been very thorough, and the Administration were responding in a positive way. It was a careful and considered report and he supported the proposal for the Task Group to continue review.

The Leader commented that AN had been reviewing their activities and he felt this could usefully be presented to Scrutiny.

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) Cabinet support the following requests to Active Northumberland:
 - (a) whilst acknowledging that a reduced membership price offer has also been introduced for NCC employees, school staff, NHS and uniformed services employees, consideration be given, in principle, to reduced cost memberships where appropriate within the ongoing fees and charges review to enable the greatest level of concessions to focus on the impact on the people who need them most, especially children, to assist a balance between fair pricing and optimising participation;
 - (b) continue to ensure that teaching children to swim is a priority and work to better utilise smaller pools within communities and ensure access to all;
 - (c) whilst the Exercise Referral Scheme is under review and anticipated improvements will be implemented later in 2019, for which members welcome a new pricing model and concessionary scheme for people with low incomes, plus an increased focus on a weight management element, work should take place with Northumberland CCG to explore the drop in referrals and promote the uptake where appropriate;
 - (d) Active Northumberland be asked to increase publicity about what particular activities are available locally in centres, what activities were funded by their expenditure and stories about what service users have achieved through Active Northumberland activities/facilities;
 - (e) although firstly acknowledging that the demand for the service is being met and it has a small waiting list, further support the Pegasus Centre through looking at options for improved signage, work with the Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA) to promote volunteering, work experience opportunities for maintenance and repair work for some Kirkley Hall students, raising its profile perhaps at Local Area Council meetings;
 - (f) the provision of community activities for young people, including school holiday provision, be considered during the strategic review of the Sports Development Service;
 - (g) support consideration being given to how different elements of the Council could coordinate with Active Northumberland to support and promote leisure and fitness activities supporting health, social care, school improvement, resilient communities, local economy, tourism, environment, employment and workforce issues; and

- (2) Cabinet express support for the following work/initiatives undertaken/being considered by Active Northumberland:
- (h) Active Northumberland's charitable status, ethos, commitment, confidence placed in current staff, demonstration of a good organisational culture, focus on improving health outcomes and provision of apprenticeships and part time roles for young people;
 - (i) Active Northumberland's work to improve their understanding of user needs, attract people who currently did not use their services, and measures being undertaken with schools and adult social care to de-medicalise interventions and use leisure services to tackle loneliness and isolation;
 - (j) support for the new countywide Physical Activity Strategy and the role that Active Northumberland will play in implementing it;
 - (k) the developing managerial solution to enable school facilities to be open for use on evenings;
 - (l) rolling out the model used at Wentworth Leisure Centre to ensure a balance between the differing needs of swimming clubs and public swims;
 - (m) the continuation of concessionary rates for students during summer months;
 - (n) health coaching work;
 - (o) explore the possible use of community venues for leisure activities such as church centres and village halls where appropriate, in acknowledgement of some people's reluctance to attend leisure centres;
 - (p) the new branding, including its key focus on supporting people to become active;
 - (q) the outputs and deliverables presented;
 - (r) the £700,000 investment into refurbishing the Wentworth gym and reception experience; and
 - (s) the £5m investment into Blyth Sports Centre; and
- (3) Cabinet note that the Health and Wellbeing OSC will receive a progress update on all the above recommendations later in 2019/20 and the Task and Finish Group's views on the next steps for continuing any further scrutiny of this topic.

22. LOCAL AREA COUNCIL FEEDBACK

Cabinet was asked to receive feedback from recent Local Area Council meetings (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix F).

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

23. REPORT OF THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

Advance Northumberland Limited

The report updated members on the transition of the Council's wholly owned company Arch (Corporate Holdings) Ltd. to Advance Northumberland Limited and advise of progress with the operating agreement between the Council and Advance Northumberland Limited (Appendix G, along with the report of the CSEG OSC circulated at the meeting).

In accordance with Minute No. 16, Councillors Jackson and Wearmouth left the room whilst this matter was considered.

Councillor Oliver in the Chair.

Councillor Oliver provided some background to the current position and advised that this report was the final part of setting revised arrangements in place which would bring things in order. Decisions were now being made separately, the Advance Board structure had changed to include a wider range of skills and expertise, and a Loan Review Group had been set up. A very detailed Operating Agreement set out clearly the respective roles and the reserved matters. The advice was that Advance could operate as a Teckal company. Appropriate safeguards and restrictions were built into the arrangements, and it would be able to take advantage of the regeneration opportunities available. Any loans would have to be properly and clearly determined. He commended the report to members.

Councillor Bawn reported that the Scrutiny Committee had welcomed the amount of work which had gone into this. The provision of an operating agreement had corrected a big gap in the previous governance arrangements. There had been some concern that the confidential draft operating agreement and appendices had only been circulated at the meeting. However, it had been agreed that the Scrutiny Committee would have a briefing in more detail on the issue and could feed back any comments to the S151 Officer or Head of Paid Service. The Committee had also been keen to ensure that a review process was implemented so that they could input into that where necessary.

Councillor Riddle felt the recommendations from Scrutiny were sound and agreed on the need to be open and transparent. He felt that any Teckal contracts should go through Scrutiny. Councillor Oliver responded that he would take advice on this.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the report be noted;
- (b) the Draft Operating Agreement between the Council and Advance Northumberland Limited shown at Appendix A to the report be noted;
- (c) the Chief Executive as the Head of Paid Service, be authorised in conjunction with the Council's Section 151 Officer to finalise the operating agreement;
- (d) the Council's Chief Executive, as the Head of Paid Service, be authorised to sign the Operating Agreement on behalf of the Council;
- (e) it be noted that Advance Northumberland (Developments) Limited will be run on the basis of a Teckal company;
- (f) the changes to the operation of the loans working group be noted;
- (g) the following delegated limits for approval of individual loans to Advance Northumberland Limited or any of its subsidiaries, which are within the Council's budget be agreed:
 - Up to £1 million - Section 151 Officer (or Deputy) in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services (or Deputy Leader)
 - Above £1 million and up to £5 million - Chief Executive (or Deputy) in conjunction with the Deputy Leader of the Council
 - Above £5 million - Cabinet
- (h) it be noted that if the loans requested exceed the annual allocation in the Council's budget, then a report will be produced for Cabinet;
- (i) the next steps be noted; and
- (j) the report and recommendations of the CSEG OSC be approved.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....