

CORPORATE SERVICES AND ECONOMIC GROWTH OSC

REPORTS TO THE CABINET

11 FEBRUARY 2020

1. Budget 2020-21 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2020-22

Members of all four overview and scrutiny committees were invited to attend and participate in the discussion of this item. Most Cabinet members were also in attendance.

Councillor Peter Jackson, Leader of the Council and Nick Oliver, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Cabinet Secretary presented this report to the Committee on 10 February 2020. Chris Hand, Executive Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) was also in attendance to respond to comments and queries from members.

The Leader reported that the budget was about increases in funding and how best to manage demand, particularly in adult social care and children's services. He was keen to see greater innovation in upgrading service provision for the county's residents. The Council was continuing to push for cultural changes through a One Council approach; digital transformation, and its transformation programme. Town Centre transformation, particularly in Ashington, Bedlington, Blyth and Hexham, was key to the Capital Programme together with new leisure centres, schools and progressing the Northumberland Line Project. He was also pleased to announce that an additional £15m would be available to repair and upgrade pavements in towns and housing estates, and minor roads in the county.

Members sought clarification on a number of issues arising from the Leader's statement and the accompanying report. In addition, scrutiny members made the following key points:

- pavement/minor roads improvement: a programme of works was being drafted and members were requested to highlight any areas of highway for possible inclusion to Councillor Sanderson;
- electric car charging points: the Council would seek to make only a reasonable charge for their use, and
- Northumberland Line: it was hoped that an announcement on funding would be made by the Chancellor at the next Budget. The Leader confirmed that he had made representations to the Government that the project should be delivered in one phase to ensure that the project would be more cost effective.

The Committee requested that Cabinet note the issues raised by the OSC members when it considered this report.

COUNCILLOR DAVID BAWN

CHAIRMAN