

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

At a remote meeting of the **Cabinet** held on Tuesday 13 October 2020 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillor G. Sanderson
(Leader of the Council, in the Chair)

CABINET MEMBERS

Dodd, R.	Riddle, J.R.
Jones, V.	Watson, J.G.
Oliver, N.	Wearmouth, R.
Renner-Thompson, G.	

OTHER MEMBERS

Flux, B.	Reid, J.
Pattison, W.	

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Bradley, N.	Service Director – Strategic Commissioning and Finance
Hadfield, K.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Hand, C.	Executive Director of Finance
Jones, P.	Service Director: Local Services
Lally, D.	Chief Executive
Lancaster, H.	Principal Solicitor
McLoughlin, J.	Executive Director: Regeneration, Commercial and Economy
McEvoy-Carr, C.	Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services
O'Farrell, R.	Interim Executive Director: Place
Roll, J.	Head of Democratic and Electoral Services
Rose, J.	Head of Economy and Regeneration

Ch.'s Initials.....

125. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 8 September 2020, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

126. REPORT OF THE INTERIM ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE

COVID-19: Response and Recovery Update

This paper followed a report to Cabinet on 23rd June 2020 and provided members with the latest update on the impact of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic on the work of the Council. It provided an overview of the Council's ongoing response and recovery initiatives since June (copy attached to the signed minutes as (Appendix A).

The report was introduced by Daljit Lally. She highlighted the main points of the report and referred to the Authority's inclusion as a Tier Two region, which provided the Authority with some flexibility, though there was more work to be done. The report was very detailed, and she stressed the need to maintain support for the vulnerable, expressing her thanks to schools, teachers and unions for maintaining school provision in very difficult circumstances.

The Leader expressed his thanks for the efforts made by staff so far, in particular the Executive Team, schools and care homes, the Enforcement Team, the Community Hub, the Communications Team and Cabinet Members. It was important to be prepared for a potential Tier Three designation. He did not expect this to be necessary, but the Authority would be guided by experts.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the ongoing impact of the Coronavirus emergency on the County Council be noted;
- (b) Cabinet acknowledge the continued work undertaken to date by the Council;
- (c) further reports be received on the work being undertaken by the Council, particularly in light of new local and national restrictions introduced recently; and
- (d) the Overview and Scrutiny Committees be invited to examine updates on response and recovery plans.

127. REPORTS OF THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PLACE

(1) Northumberland Climate Change

The report provided an update on the actions taken by the County Council since the full Council approved the Climate Change Action Plan 2020-21 in January 2020 and sought Cabinet approval for the proposed next steps, and the associated additional revenue expenditure. The report set out 7 priority action areas for the Council to pursue its climate change ambition (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix B, along with the report of the Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC).

Councillor Sanderson introduced the report and thanked all those who had been involved in the work thus far, including Rachel Bruce the Communications Officer dealing with climate change.

Rick O'Farrell provided members with an update on progress and drew members' attention to the seven priority action areas, of which member endorsement was sought, and six key policy areas which were detailed in Section 5 of the report.

The Leader referred to the report from Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC, which had supported the recommendations.

Members all spoke in support of the report, recognising the excellent work which was being carried out and the progress being made. The Authority was leading the way with the work it was doing, and it was commented that these activities should not be seen as anti-business, but very much pro-business.

The Leader agreed that the Authority was leading the way and taking this seriously and this was demonstrated by the wide range of projects being undertaken from the free tree initiative which had been oversubscribed within four days, to the much bigger projects such as the heat source pumps. Checking each of the Council's activities against the Action Plan was a very significant step.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the progress made against the Climate Change Action Plan 2020-21 be noted;
- (b) all Priority Action Areas be endorsed;
- (c) Cabinet approve the allocation of financial resources of £69.3k revenue required for continued heat mapping work in 2020/21 from the Regeneration Reserve Development Fund;

- (d) the policy recommendations detailed in Section 5 of the report be endorsed namely :
- a) Each service area has been asked to produce an 'Enhanced Service Plan' which includes the requirement for every service to consider what actions and initiatives they could take to contribute to carbon reduction and sustainability ambitions so that climate change forms an integral part of the service planning process.
 - b) In order to ensure Councillors make informed decisions when considering the climate change implications of a proposed policy coming to Cabinet and full Council, it will be necessary to undertake a carbon assessment for each policy decision. The details of how such a process will be operated and resourced will be provided in the climate action plan 2021-23, where approval will be sought to put this into place with a provisional starting date of April 2021 to coincide with the new financial year.
 - c) A new Procurement Corporate Social Responsibility policy is being developed by the procurement service which will seek to reduce carbon emissions where financially viable through our commissioned services and the Council's supply chains. The details of this policy will be brought to Cabinet in a separate paper.
 - d) It will be necessary to review the Council's salary sacrifice staff incentive schemes so that we recognise the environmental costs associated with some goods and services and to ensure we offer sustainable options. Our aim in this is not to limit choice but rather to encourage and support staff to make more sustainable options.
 - e) To help reduce the carbon impact and financial cost of business mileage there should be a virtual option for all meetings unless deemed inappropriate. This will allow officers, Councillors, external partners and residents to attend meetings without the requirement to travel.
 - f) It would be beneficial to conduct carbon emission evaluations on each of the Council's new housing projects. These evaluations will consider, in line with cost, affordable housing and other priorities, how we build energy efficiency measures into new projects to prevent expensive future retrofitting;
- (e) it be noted that further revenue and capital funding requirements will be identified to support the Council's Climate Change activities through the wider budgetary process being undertaken to develop the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan for 21/22; and
- (f) the report of the Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC be

noted.

(2) Northumberland Waste Management Strategy – Proposed Trial of Kerbside Glass Collection

The report outlined the modelling and options appraisal work undertaken in 18/19 and 19/20 in order to review and update the Council's Municipal Waste Management Strategy 2003 - 2020. The latest modelling work had sought to more accurately quantify the actual costs of undertaking new waste collection and disposal arrangements that would meet the Government's longer term policy direction, as set out in 'Our waste, our resources, a strategy for England', which would require local authorities to collect a core set of dry recyclables and a weekly collection of food waste. In particular, the implications of introducing a new four weekly kerbside glass collection service had been evaluated, to see if this service could be introduced cost effectively in advance of food waste collections to enhance the County's recycling performance (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix C, along with the report of the Communities and Place OSC).

Paul Jones introduced the report highlighting that, whilst the Council's previous strategy had served the Council well, the time was right now to move forward and re-evaluate the Council's services in line with current Government strategy. A detailed modelling exercise had been carried out to look at a whole range of configurations using best practice elsewhere and the result of this was detailed in Table 4. The preferred option was 1c which built on the Council's existing recycling services.

A progressive rollout of the new arrangements was proposed starting with glass collection trials across 4000 households in four areas. These areas had been decided on an operational basis taking into account the demographic of the areas so that they were consistent and would give a statistically proportionate result across the whole County. This would be a monthly collection and the communications on this would be key so residents could subscribe to a text alert for this service. Funding for this had already been identified in the MTFP, but funding to implement the new arrangements in full was significant and would not be known until the Government finalised its strategy and put legislation in place. Then the key longer term decisions could be made for the way forward for Northumberland.

Councillor Reid introduced the Communities and Place OSC report. The Committee had agreed that the report was well written and researched and had asked a lot of questions which had been answered. Members had been optimistic about it being successful but had commented that it was important for staff to have the proper PPE. The only concern was whether the funding would be there as there were a lot of elements outside the Authority's control. Paul Jones advised that health and safety considerations were key and the corporate H&S team had been involved in discussions on this. Noise was a major element and specialist noise cancelling PPE equipment would be used which would deaden the noise but still allowed staff to communicate with each other.

Councillor Watson sought assurances that sufficient thought had been given to areas where there might not be sufficient space for the extra bins. Members were advised that the containers and public participation were key aspects of any recycling service. The containers had been selected to minimise the number of containers which were required so more material could be co-mingled. However, not every household could take a wide range of containers so there would have to be some bespoke arrangements.

Councillor Riddle commented that the three weekly collection message would need ongoing reinforcement and asked about the selection criteria for the pilot areas. Paul advised that they had looked at what overall number would give a statistically valid response for the trial and then the operational aspects and demographics were looked at. The areas chosen were also close to depots.

Councillor Pattison asked why the Authority was so far behind other authorities in terms of dealing with food waste. Paul advised that in 2009 the Authority had developed as part of its contractual arrangements an energy from waste facility which processed food waste to create electricity for the national grid, so the authority was ahead of other authorities in this respect. Food waste had a higher value if it was put through anaerobic digestion and this would be good enhancement to the service, however, there were significant costs attached to this. Anaerobic digestion was now available at a number of facilities in the north east so this could now be considered as a viable proposition.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the key findings of the waste service modelling work that has been undertaken to date be noted;
- (b) Cabinet note that the modelling has shown that continuation of alternate weekly comingled and refuse collections, with the addition of monthly collection of glass and weekly food collection meets the obligations of the Resources and Waste Strategy and achieves the Council's recycling ambition of a +50% recycling rate;
- (c) Cabinet note that the Resources and Waste Strategy is subject to further consultation, and the preferred approach in Northumberland may change once the final obligations and arrangements for funding support are known;
- (d) Cabinet approve the introduction of a 12 month kerbside glass collection trial to test the modelling assumptions and long term viability of adding glass to the existing kerbside collection arrangements. The estimated cost to roll out a trial to approximately 4,000 properties covering 4 different areas in order to provide a statistically significant and demographically representative sample size is £43,000 revenue (to be funded from the transformation reserve) and capital of £62,000

(to purchase the containers for which capital provision has already made in the MTFP); and

- (e) the report of the Communities and Place OSC be noted.

128. JOINT REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF COMMERCIAL, REGENERATION AND ECONOMY AND THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal Investment Programme

The report sought approval for the inclusion of the first phase of the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal Investment Fund, for the Alnwick Garden Lillidorei; Ad Gefrin Distillery; and Energy Masterplan projects, in accordance with the Council's role as accountable body for the Growth Deal Investment Fund awarded by the UK Government in England, within the Council's capital and revenue budgets (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix D, along with the report of the Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC).

Janice Rose introduced the report and reminded members that the County Council were the accountable body for the funding coming in on the English side of the deal which equated to £200m over the ten years of the deal. Management of the projects was done through the capital programme and then the Capital Strategy Group could monitor the spend appropriately. The money came in from government and it was then dispersed through grant funding agreements to projects so there were no financial implications for the Council. The deal document which would specify all of the projects was expected to be finalised in February 2021.

She also advised members that the Authority was the first sub region in the country to be asked by Government to co-produce a low carbon energy master plan for the whole of the Borderlands area. There would be sub action plans as part of this related to smaller localities – probably 3-4 for Northumberland. A capital allocation grant was received from government which allowed a revenue swap to take place within the accounts so again, no financial implication for the Council.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) Cabinet approve the addition of the Alnwick Garden Lillidorei and Ad Gefrin Distillery schemes to the Council's capital programme, and note that these projects will be fully funded from Section 31 Government Growth Deal Investment Fund Grant, awarded by the UK Government;
- (b) Council be recommended to approve a revenue budget of £1.100 million for the Energy Masterplan project, and subsequent virement of £1.100 million of revenue budget in 2020-21 from an existing revenue budget, for the cost of borrowing, to fund the project. This proposal has a net nil cost to the Council, as detailed in the report; and

- (c) the report of the Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC be noted.

129. REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

Approval of the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2021-22

The report sought approval for the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2021-22 to continue to provide support at a maximum level of 92% of Council Tax Liability (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix E, along with the report of the Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC).

The report was produced by Councillor Oliver who highlighted that £26.6m had been spent on providing Council Tax support in the County. The Authority remained the second most generous Council in the LA7 area. The scheme had been introduced two years ago and the proposal was that it continue.

This year there had been some Covid funding from Government to provide additional support to those on low incomes or claiming benefits. This meant that 13,000 people had had no Council Tax to pay this year, which had used £2.2m of the funding received. It was expected that about £1.1m would be available to apply to next year, providing a discount of 97.5% to these claimants.

It was noted that Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC had supported the recommendations.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) County Council be recommended to approve the Council Tax Support Scheme attached to the report as Appendix 1 to be adopted as the Council's local scheme for 2021-22; and
- (b) the report of the Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC be noted.

130. 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 on 4 September 2020 (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix F).

130.1 Northumberland Line Ground Investigation Works

Councillor Wearmouth stressed that it was very important to approve this today so that rapid progress could continue on the delivery of the Northumberland Line. The final business case was now with DfT.

RESOLVED that a funding allocation of £870,000 be approved to complete the Off-track ground investigation works to be funded from the Northumberland Line allocation in the approved capital programme for 2020-21. It was noted that this requested allocation could be reimbursed and reinstated to the Capital Programme depending upon the outcome of the ongoing discussions with the Department of Transport within the context of Project SPEED.

130.2 A189 Moor Farm Roundabout S106 improvements

RESOLVED that a funding contribution of £210,000 be agreed for highway improvements, secured via a Section 106 agreement from a development at Chapel View in East Cramlington, be added to the Council's capital programme for the Local Transport Plan and used to improve safety on the A189 southbound approach to Moor Farm Roundabout.

130.3 Winter Services Fleet Systems Enhancement

RESOLVED that County Council be recommended to approve a new capital requirement of £228,000 for the purchase of enhanced gritter operating systems as a revenue saving scheme delivering annual savings of £39,000.

130.4 County Hall Solar Carport Additional Funding

Councillor Oliver commented that this was a flagship project for the Authority and if the Council was to achieve its ambitions, it needed to demonstrate that it was taking it seriously by completing this project at the Council's biggest building in its estate, and by doing everything it could to lead by example and show that electric cars were a good choice.

RESOLVED that Cabinet approve additional capital funding of up to £423,000 to support the County Hall Solar Carport, Storage and Electric Vehicle Charging Project. It is noted that a subsequent bid will be made to the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) which may result in up to 50% of this additional cost being grant funded.

131. 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 item on the Agenda as it involves 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 outweighs the public interest in disclosure for the following reasons:-

Agenda Item	Paragraph of Part I of Schedule 12A
11	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 disclosure would prejudice Advance Northumberland's ability to negotiate with partners and give its competitors a commercial advantage.

132. REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF COMMERCIAL, REGENERATION AND ECONOMY

Enterprise Zone – Northumberland Energy Park, East Sleekburn (NEP1)

The report informed members of the increase in costs for the delivery of the NEP1 Enterprise Zone Site, and sought approval to the revised funding package to enable completion of the works copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix G, coloured pink and marked “not for Publication”, along with the report of the Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC).

Councillors Wearmouth and Renner Thompson declared interests as Directors of Advance and did not vote on this matter.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) recommendations 1-4 in the report be approved; and
- (b) the report of the Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC be noted.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....