

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

At the meeting of the **Cabinet** held at Council Chamber - County Hall on Wednesday, 21 September 2022 at 4.40 pm.

PRESENT

G Sanderson (Chair) (in the Chair)

MEMBERS

G Renner-Thompson
J Watson
C Horncastle
W Ploszaj

J Riddle
R Wearmouth
W Pattison

OTHER COUNCILLORS

OFFICERS

One member of the press was present.

1 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of Cabinet held on Tuesday 12 July 2022, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

2 REPORT OF THE JOINT INTERIM DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Outcomes of Consultation on Proposals for the Coquet Partnership

RESOLVED that:-

(a) the feedback from the informal (non-statutory Consultation) be noted;

(b) Cabinet note that consultation that took place between 11 May and 29 June, summarised at paras. 18 to 26 of the report;

(c) Cabinet agree to permit the publication of a Statutory Proposal setting out the intention of the Council to implement the proposals as follows:

Extend the age range of Amble First School from an age 4-9 first school to an age 4-11 primary school and relocate the school building with effect from 1 September 2024;

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Extend the age range of Amble Links First School from an age 2-9 first school to an age 2-11 primary school and expand the school in accordance with table 5 of the report building with effect from 1 September 2024;

Extend the age range of Broomhill First School from an age 3-9 first school to an age 3-11 primary school and expand the school building with effect from 1 September 2024;

Extend the age range of Red Row First School from an age 3-9 first school to an age 3-11 primary school and expand the school building with effect from 1 September 2024;

Reduce the age range of James Calvert Spence College from an age 9-18 school to an age 11-18 secondary school with effect from 1 September 2025;

(d) Cabinet agree to permit the publication of a Statutory Proposal setting out the intention of the Council to increase the number of pupil places at Barndale House Special School by 50 places for children and young people diagnosed with special educational needs, primarily those with ASD, SEMH, Speech Language and Communication (SLCN) and Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) through the addition of a satellite site in the current South Avenue site of JCSC. It was noted that this was a standalone proposal and was not dependent on the outcome of the decision in relation to the proposals for the first schools and JCSC set out at recommendation (c);

(e) Cabinet note that it has previously approved capital investment in the Medium Term Plan to replace/refurbish the buildings of JCSC on its current site, and therefore the preferred building solutions and the associated indicative capital costs of the proposals set out in recommendations c) to f) set out in para. 55 of the report be noted, and that the Medium Term Plan will need to be increased by £11.1m to accommodate these capital costs as detailed in para. 55 of the report. Cabinet also noted that £2m of the additional funding required from MTFP will be achieved by reducing the budget for Astley as detailed in para. 55 of the report;

(f) Cabinet note that the outcomes of the publication of the Statutory Proposals will be brought back to Cabinet within 2 months of the date of their publication for a final decision; and

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

3 **REPORT OF THE INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

Energising Blyth Culture Placemaking Programme: Outline Business Case

RESOLVED that:-

(a) the Outline Business Case (OBC) for the Culture Placemaking Programme to enable progression to Full Business Case be approved; and

(b) authority be delegated, in accordance with the Local Assurance Framework, to the Council's s151 Officer following consideration by the Energising Blyth

Ch.'s Initials.....

Programme Board to approve the Full Business Case and report the capital implications to Capital Strategy Group for inclusion in the Capital Programme.

4 REPORT OF THE INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Energising Blyth Energy Central Campus Phase 1 - Learning Hub: Outline Business Case

RESOLVED that:-

(a) the Outline Business Case (OBC) for the Energy Central Campus Phase 1 - Learning Hub be approved to enable progression to Full Business Case; and

(b) authority be delegated, in accordance with the Local Assurance Framework, to the Council's s151 Officer following consideration by the Energising Blyth Programme Board to approve the Full Business Case and report the capital implications to Capital Strategy Group for inclusion in the Capital Programme.

5 REPORT OF THE INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Energising Blyth Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult Technology Demonstration Centre: Outline Business Case

RESOLVED that:-

(a) the Outline Business Case (OBC) for the OREC Technology Demonstration Centre be approved to enable progression to Full Business Case;

(b) authority be delegated, in accordance with the Local Assurance Framework, to the Council's s151 Officer following consideration by the Energising Blyth Programme Board to approve the Full Business Case, subject to a satisfactory subsidy control solution and report the capital implications to Capital Strategy Group for inclusion in the Capital Programme.

6 REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Food & Feed, Safety & Standards Service Plan 2022/23

RESOLVED that:-

(a) the Food and Feed, Safety and Standards Service Plan for 2022/23 be received and adopted; and

(b) the report of the Communities and Places OSC be noted.

7 REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Ch.'s Initials.....

Proposals for the allocation of the Public Health ring-fenced grant reserve to reduce health inequalities

RESOLVED that:-

(a) the allocation of funding from the Public Health reserve as proposed in the report be approved;

(b) authority be delegated to the Director of Public Health the precise expenditure of the funding set aside to address issues around poverty; and

(c) the report of the Health and Wellbeing OSC be noted.

8 REPORT OF THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & LOCAL SERVICES

Adoption of Hexham Shopfront Design Guide and Alnwick Shopfront Design Guide

RESOLVED that the Hexham Shopfront Design Guide and the Alnwick Shopfront Design Guide be adopted as formal guidance as material considerations in the determination of planning applications, and to inform relevant Council/stakeholder project design.

9 REPORT OF THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & LOCAL SERVICES

Endorsement of Conservation Area Character Appraisal for Bamburgh

RESOLVED that the contents of the Bamburgh Conservation Area Character Appraisal be noted and Cabinet endorse its use as an evidence base to inform Council decisions.

10 REPORT OF THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & LOCAL SERVICES

Making the Haydon Parish Neighbourhood Plan

RESOLVED that

(a) Cabinet note the referendum outcome of 30 June 2022;

(b) Cabinet agrees to formally 'make' the Haydon Parish Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with section 38A(4)(a) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004;

(c) Cabinet approves the decision statement (attached at Appendix 1) required under Regulation 19 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, as amended, and

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(d) Cabinet agrees that both the Haydon Parish 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 for the decision statement to be sent to the qualifying body and anyone else who asked to be notified of the decision.

11 **REPORT OF THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND SECTION 151 OFFICER**

Financial Performance 2022-23 - Position at the end of June 2022

RESOLVED that:-

(a) Cabinet note the services projected overspend of £4.813 million and the assumptions outlined in the report;

(b) Cabinet agree the inflationary increase that will be awarded in relation to home to school transport contracts to cover fuel inflation and backdate it to April 2022;

(c) Cabinet agree the increase for commissioned home care providers to enable them to pay the staff who use their own cars a mileage rate of £0.45 per mile (increased from £0.25 per mile) with effect from 1 September 2022. The increase will be funded from existing resources within the service;

(d) Cabinet note the potential overspend of £17.135 million following the employer's pay award, utility and fuel inflation;

(e) Cabinet note the following actions which will be implemented with immediate effect in order to help bring the budget back in line and minimise/contain the overspend:

- The Council will be inviting applications from staff for voluntary redundancy.
- The normal budget approval process is now suspended, and all expenditure will be authorised by Executive Directors. A pro forma has been issued and all managers needing to spend will be expected to complete a business case to justify the expenditure and obtain formal sign off.
- There is now a freeze on in-year contingency requests and the balance on the contingency will be utilised to offset the inflationary increases and potential overspend
- Whilst there will not be a moratorium imposed in relation to recruitment to vacant posts, a vacancy panel will be established where all requests to recruit to posts will be considered. The vacancy panel will then make recommendations to the Executive Team who will make the ultimate decision.

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- The Executive Team will look selectively to increase fees and charges in year. Any proposals deemed necessary will be referred to Cabinet for a formal decision.
- The Executive Team has been reminded and will instruct all managers to be proactive and ensure “good housekeeping”; e.g. ensure that all of their suppliers are on the supplier incentive scheme, review contracts and request better value from their suppliers.
- The capital programme is being reviewed particularly in relation to contract price inflation. Once this exercise is complete then the cost of capital and debt charges (borrowing) will be examined to establish any potential for an in-year revenue budget underspend to offset the impending Council overspend.
- All capital projects going ahead will be contained within their existing approvals even if it means revisiting the scope of the project. Value engineering will be considered as well as a reduction to or a deferral of each project.

(f) Cabinet approve re-profiling to the Capital Programme of £41.706 million from 2022-23 to 2023-24 to reflect estimated expenditure levels in the current financial year;

(g) Cabinet approve the new grants and amendments to existing grants at Appendix A and the required changes to the budgets;

(h) Cabinet note the progress on the delivery of the approved savings at Appendix B;

(i) Cabinet note the use of the contingency shown at Appendix Q;

(j) Cabinet note the use of reserves shown at Appendix R;

(k) Cabinet note the virements requested by services shown at Appendix S; and

(l) Cabinet note that the outcome of the strategic review of Advance Northumberland will be reported to the November Cabinet meeting and will include a request to commission external advice on the group structure and financial model.

12 **REPORT OF THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND SECTION 151 OFFICER**

Summary of New Capital Proposals considered by Officer Capital Strategy Group

RESOLVED that:-

NFRS Fire Control Mobilising System:

Ch.'s Initials.....

Cabinet approve spend of £89,000 for further necessary upgrades to the Northumberland Fire & Rescue Service (NFRS) Fire Control Mobilising System to be funded from the FRS Risk Critical Equipment Budget for 22/23 (£25,000) and 23/24 (£64,000) in the Council's 2022-26 MTFP.

Longframlington Affordable Housing Units

Cabinet approve the acquisition of two 3 bedroom, section106 houses on the Cussins Lightpipe Farm Development in Longframlington at a total cost of £312,000 funded through the HRA Affordable Homes Budget included in the 2022-26 MTFP.

Desktop Refresh Preparation

Cabinet approve the transfer of £100,000 from the Cloud Migration Budget to the Desktop Refresh Budget in 2022/23 with a corresponding reversal in 2023/24 to enable the appointment of an external IT consultancy to commence the necessary planning and scoping for the roll out of the Desktop Refresh Programme which will commence in 2023/24.

Pegswood Childrens Home Grant Award

Cabinet accept a grant award of £429,000 from the Department for Education as a contribution towards the construction of the Childrens Home at Pegswood and increase the budget accordingly. The original project was approved by Cabinet in December 2019 at a cost of £648,000. However due to construction cost inflation since that date, the build cost has increased to £960,000. The Grant will therefore enable the project to be delivered within the approved budget limit.

B6344 Todstead Landslip Repairs

(a) Cabinet approve repairs to the B6344 at Todstead at a total cost of £9,316,000, to be funded from the Todstead Landslip budget included in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan for 2022-26 with £2,500,000 being spent in 2022/23 and £6,816,000 in 2023/24; and

(b) authority be delegated to the Council's Interim Chief Executive to sign the works contract for the project up to a value of £8,600,000.

Next Generation Flood Resilience

(a) Cabinet approve the allocation and associated expenditure for Next Generation Flood Resilience within the Council's MTFP of £5,605,000 for the years 2022/23 to 2026/27 to be fully funded by the Environment Agency's Flood & Coast Resilience Innovation Fund and increase the budget accordingly; and
(b) authority be delegated to the Council's Interim Chief Executive to sign relevant works contracts up to a value of £5,000,000.

Contracts in excess of Delegated Limits

(a) Cabinet had previously approved capital investment for the County Hall Solar PV Carport Project in June 2019 and October 2020 to a total budget value of

£3,362,120.

RESOLVED that Cabinet approval be given to award the contract for the project to UK Power Network Ltd at a price of £3,059,767 in order to carry out the works.

(b) Cabinet had previously approved capital investment of £5,500,000 to refurbish the vacant Richard Coates School in Ponteland to enable the relocation of Atkinson House Special School from Seghill.

RESOLVED that Cabinet approval be given to award a contract for the project to Robertson Construction Group Ltd for the sum of £4,943,168.

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 outweighs the public interest in disclosure for the following reasons:-

Agenda Item - 17

Paragraph of Part I of Schedule 12A - 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

AND

The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure because disclosure could adversely affect the business reputation or confidence in the person / organisation and could adversely affect commercial revenue.

14 **REPORT OF THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND S151 OFFICER**

Trading Companies' Financial Performance 2022-23 - Position at the end of June 2022

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

Ch.'s Initials.....

CHAIR.....

DATE.....

Ch.'s Initials.....