

Northumberland County Council – Decisions taken by the Cabinet on Tuesday, 16 January 2024

Agenda Item No	Topic	Decision
Part A – Items considered in public		
A2	MINUTES	RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the meeting of Cabinet held on Tuesday 12 December 2023, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.
A3	DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS	Whilst not specific declarations of interest, Councillors Sanderson and Jones wished to have it recorded that they had family members who worked for the County Council.
A4	REPORT OF THE COMMUNITIES AND PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	<p>RESOLVED that:-</p> <p>(a) the recommendation from Scrutiny to consider investment in the enforcement team and the addition of a rolling fighting fund to support this work be accepted;</p> <p>(b) the recommendation from Scrutiny to also consider additional support for the Planning Department to deal with the increase in the number of planning applications and enquiries received be considered as part of the forthcoming budget process; and</p> <p>(c) a policy conference around the planning process and enforcement be set up.</p>
A5	REPORT OF THE LEADER AND DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES	RESOLVED that the update be noted.
A6	REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES	<p>RESOLVED that:-</p> <p>1. Cabinet approve the Housing Revenue Account 2024-25 budget as detailed within Appendix 1, which will reduce the balance on the HRA reserve from £28.175 million at 31 March 2024, to £19.193 million at 31 March 2025; and</p>

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		<p>note the indicative budgets to 2027-28 which will reduce the balance of the HRA reserve to £13.708 million;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Cabinet note that from 1 April 2024, social housing rent will be increased by Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus 1.00% as per the previously agreed Rent Standard. The budget detailed in Appendix 1 assumes that rents will rise by CPI 6.70% plus 1.00% with recoverable service charges also rising by CPI plus 1.00% for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025; 3. Cabinet approve the increase of 7.70% for housing rents from 1 April 2024 in line with the Government rent standard; 4. Cabinet approve the increase of 7.70% for housing service charges from 1 April 2024; 5. Cabinet approve the Non-Recurrent Growth Item Hardship Fund of £0.350 million for 2024-25 to support NCC tenants who may, due to their income, not be eligible to receive any financial assistance through existing benefits (Housing Benefit/Universal Credit/Discretionary Housing Payment) (detailed in points 6.5 & 6.11); 6. Cabinet approve that any unspent balance in relation to the Hardship Fund for 2023-24, can be carried forward as an earmarked reserve into 2024-25 (detailed in point 6.5) and added to the 2024-25 in-year budget allocation; 7. Cabinet note the indicative 30-year Housing Revenue Account business plan as detailed within Appendix 1; 8. Cabinet approve the estimated pay inflationary increase for 2024-25 of 4.00% totalling £0.447 million (detailed in point 6.10); 9. Cabinet approve the Non-Pay Inflation Schedule for 2024-25 totalling £0.280 million (detailed in point 6.10); 10. Cabinet approve the Recurrent Growth as follows:

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		<p>a) Housing Disrepair of £0.275 million from 2024-25 to cover the costs of housing disrepair mitigation and resolution; and note that the budget will be reduced by £0.150 million after 5 years (detailed in point 6.11).</p> <p>b) Additional staffing budget of £0.367 million from 2024-25 (detailed in point 6.11).</p> <p>c) Additional budget for consumable materials for void properties of £0.159 million from 2024-25 (detailed in point 6.11).</p> <p>11. Cabinet note the Recurrent Saving in relation to the Introduction of phased Service Charges for Sheltered Housing tenants, with estimated additional income of £0.120 million in 2024-25 (50.00%), £0.180 million in 2025-26 (75.00%) and £0.240 million 2026-27 (100.00%) as agreed within the budget and MTFP 2023-24 (detailed in point 6.12);</p> <p>12. Cabinet note and approve the expenditure plan relating to £41.434 million which has been set aside over the 4-year period 2024-25 to 2027-28 in the HRA Capital programme to invest in Affordable Housing. Details are set out in Appendix 1; and</p> <p>13. Cabinet approve an amendment to the Housing Rent policy, to enable re-let of HRA properties at Formula Rent from April 2025 (detailed in point 6.29).</p>
A7	REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES	<p>RESOLVED that:-</p> <p>(a) Cabinet approve the declaration of a surplus on the Collection Fund for the year ending 31 March 2024 in relation to Council Tax of £4.486 million to be distributed to the Council and Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner in accordance with Council Tax regulations; the Council's share being £4.149 million;</p> <p>(b) Cabinet note the overall estimated surplus on the Collection Fund for the year</p>

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		<p>ending 31 March 2024 in relation to Business Rates of £6.943 million; the Council's share being £3.471 million;</p> <p>(c) Cabinet note the distribution of the estimated Collection Fund surplus for Council Tax to the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner of £0.337 million, and the distribution of the estimated Collection Fund surplus for Business Rates of £3.471 million to the Secretary of State; and</p> <p>(d) Cabinet note the inclusion of the Council's share of the estimated Collection Fund balances distributable in 2023-24 of £4.149 million surplus and £3.471 million surplus for Council Tax and Business Rates respectively, within the Council's budget 2024-25.</p>
A8	REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES	<p>RESOLVED that:-</p> <p>(1) Greensfield Farm Alnwick</p> <p>Cabinet approve the spend of £0.333 million to acquire 2 3-bedroom houses on the Wynyard Homes Greensfield Farm development in Alnwick. Note this will be funded using in year capital receipts and retained capital receipts within the Housing Revenue Account.</p> <p>(2) Lyndon Walk</p> <p>(i) Cabinet approve the updated spend of the Lyndon Walk 13 bungalows proposal of £2.796 million. This will be funded from Housing Revenue</p>

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		<p>Account reserves; and</p> <p>(ii) Cabinet approve the amendment to the Capital Programme for the updated spend as profiled in the report.</p> <p>(3) Dene Park Windows</p> <p>(i) Cabinet approve the spend of £0.184 million to replace the windows at Dene Park House. Note that the funding for this project will come from the existing Property Stewardship Budget allocation within the Capital Programme; and</p> <p>(ii) Cabinet approve the amendment to the Capital Programme to reallocate £0.184 million from the Property Stewardship Budget to Dene Park House in 2023-24.</p> <p>(4) Energising Blyth Programme – Energy Central Institute</p> <p>(i) Cabinet approve the amendment to the Capital Programme to establish the Energy Central Campus Phase 2 (Energy Central Institute) as a defined project in the Capital Programme with a total budget of £15.421 million as profiled in the body of the report.</p> <p>(ii) Cabinet approve the proposal to accelerate capital spend of £1.404 million in advance of business case approval to drive forward project development inclusive of spend in 2022-23.</p>

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		<p>(iii) authority be delegated to the Executive Director for Place and Regeneration to enter into a contract to the value of £1.060 million to appoint a multi-disciplinary Design Team, subject to the appropriate procurement processes being followed.</p> <p>(iv) Cabinet approve the spend of £0.750 million to commence work on demolishing Keel Row Shopping Centre and 3-5/7-9 Bridge Street.</p> <p>(v) authority be delegated to the Executive Director for Place and Regeneration to enter into a contract for the demolition of Keel Row Shopping Centre and 3-5/7-9 Bridge Street, subject to the appropriate procurement processes being followed.</p> <p>(5) Energising Blyth Programme – Technical Fit-Out and Equipment</p> <p>(i) Cabinet approve the amendment to the Capital Programme to establish the Energy Central Campus Phase 1 – Technical Fit-Out and Equipment as a defined project with a total budget of £1.450 million as profiled in the body of the report.</p> <p>(ii) 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 any capital implications to Capital Strategy Group for consideration in the Capital Programme.</p>

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		<p>(6) Woodhorn Lift Replacement</p> <p>(i) Cabinet approve the spend of £0.121 million to replace the lift in the Winding House at Woodhorn. Note that this is funded from the existing Property Stewardship budget in the Capital Programme.</p> <p>(ii) Cabinet approve the amendment to the Capital Programme to reallocate £0.121 million from the Property Stewardship Budget to Woodhorn Lift Replacement.</p> <p>(iii) Cabinet approve the novation of the MEND grant and accept the Grant Funding Agreement Terms (subject to Legal review) from the Arts Council for the sum of £0.107 million.</p> <p>(7) County Hall – Print Room Refurbishment</p> <p>i. Cabinet note the spend of £0.125 million for the refurbishment of the County Hall Print Room. Also noting that the refurbishment work commenced on 28 November 2023, and that this is funded from the existing Property Stewardship budget in the Capital Programme.</p> <p>ii. Cabinet approve the amendment to the Capital Programme to reallocate £0.125 million from the Property Stewardship budget to County Hall – Print Room Refurbishment.</p>
A9	REPORT OF THE CABINET	RESOLVED that:-

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	MEMBER FOR SUPPORTING BUSINESS AND OPPORTUNITIES	<p>(a) Cabinet approve the following in respect of site acquisitions and required funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) that the Council complete the acquisition of the Wansbeck Square site with vacant possession, as previously agreed in principle, at a market value of £1,365,000, plus Stamp Duty Land Tax. ii) that the Council complete the acquisition of the Woodhorn Road site with vacant possession, as previously agreed in principle, at a market value of £210,000 plus Stamp Duty Land Tax. iii) that the Council approves an allocation of up to £160,000 of revenue funding from the Council’s Regeneration Reserve Development Fund to pay for the holding costs which will be incurred, following acquisition of the Wansbeck Square and Woodhorn Road sites as set out in Section 6 of the report; <p>(b) Cabinet note that following a competitive tender process, Identity Consult has been appointed as the Design Team to take forward ambitious plans for the redevelopment of Wansbeck Square and progress the designs for the Public Realm and Connectivity project, which will enable the creation of Grand Corner Gateway; and</p> <p>(c) Cabinet approve the development of a high-level business case to the North of Tyne Combined Authority in order to secure funding from the Northumberland Line Economic Corridor Investment Fund for the redevelopment of Wansbeck Square, with approval of the final bid submission delegated to the Council’s S151 Officer. The Accountable Body will monitor the use of funding subsequently awarded and ensure</p>

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		adherence to the Grant Agreement.
A10	REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR INSPIRING YOUNG PEOPLE	<p>RESOLVED that:-</p> <p>(a) Cabinet approve the proposals for the continuing implementation of the National Funding Formula for 2024/25 as agreed previously, in line with the recommendation of the Schools Forum meeting of 22 November 2023 and the results of the subsequent consultation exercise held with schools;</p> <p>(b) Cabinet approve the transfer of up to 0.5% funding from the Schools’ Block to the High Needs Block, in line with recommendation of the Schools Forum meeting of 22 November 2023 and the results of the subsequent consultation exercise held with schools; and</p> <p>(c) approval of the final formula values be delegated to the Executive Director of Children Young People & Education and Cabinet Member for Inspiring Young People in line with the principles agreed at Schools Forum on 22 November 2023, once the final budget allocations are released by the Department for Education in December 2023.</p>