

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

At a meeting of the **Cabinet** held at County Hall, Morpeth on Tuesday, 10 May 2022 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

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

CABINET MEMBERS

Horncastle, C.	Riddle, J.R.
Pattison, W.	Watson, J.G.
Ploszaj, W.	Wearmouth, R.
Renner-Thompson, G.	

OTHER MEMBERS

Flux, B.	Stewart, G.
Seymour, C.	

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Aviston, S.	Head of School Organisation
Binjal, S.	Interim Monitoring Officer
Bradley, N.	Director of Adult Social Services
Child, M.	Programme Manager
Elsdon, A.	Service Director, Finance
Hadfield, K.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Hunter, P.	Interim Senior Service Director
Kingham, A.	Interim Joint Director of Children's Services
Murfin, R.	Interim Executive Director of Planning and Local Services
O'Farrell, R.	Interim Executive Director of Place and Regeneration
Reiter, G.	Interim Joint Director of Children's Services

Ch.'s Initials.....

1. MINUTES

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

2. REPORT OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Proposals for the Coquet Partnership

The Council had approved the allocation of £25.5m of capital investment in schools in the Coquet Partnership. Before committing such investment to relevant school capital projects, Council officers had met with school leaders collectively and individually in the partnership to discuss what structure of organisation of schools would be, in their view, the most effective in improving outcomes for pupils in all phases and for the long-term sustainability of the partnership.

The report set out the findings of these meetings, and as a result of feedback received by each of the Governing Bodies of the Coquet Partnership schools to the Council, Cabinet was recommended to approve a six-week consultation on proposals for a 2-tier structure in the Coquet Partnership with effect from 13 May 2022 (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix A, along with the report of the FACS OSC circulated at the meeting).

The report was presented by Councillor Renner Thompson, following a detailed presentation from Mrs Aviston. This was the next stage in the Council's school building programme. The process would be school driven, and he stressed that there would be no school closures as all first schools would convert to primaries. He made reference to the direct links with the Berwick and Alnwick partnerships and encouraged everyone to take part in the consultation process.

Councillor Watson paid tribute to the tenacity of the staff during what had been a very lengthy debate. He welcomed the fact that consultation would now go ahead and stressed that he had no preformed opinion on the best way forward. He would be guided by the views of the consultation.

Mrs Kingham reinforced the key points which the capital investment would meet which were around meeting the wider SEN needs of the children within the Partnership much closer to home. This both contributed to the climate change agenda and action plan and was better for the children.

The Leader thanked the staff which had been involved in this and made reference to the much improved Ofsted ratings of Northumberland schools generally, which was testament to all involved. Councillor Renner Thompson advised that on August 2017, 76% of schools were judged to be good or

better by Ofsted, which was 10% below the national average. As of April 2022, 88% of schools were judged to be good or better, which was 2% above the national average.

The Leader referred to the points raised in the FACS OSC report which had been taken on board within the system.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) Cabinet approve the initiation of a 6-week preconsultation from 11 May to 29 June 2022 on proposals for a 2-tier model of school organisation in the Coquet Partnership;
- (b) Cabinet note that the following elements of education in the area will also be included in the consultation:
 - a. The SEND offer for pupils in the Coquet Partnership area;
 - b. The Early Years offer in the Coquet Partnership area;
- (c) Cabinet note the feedback received during the informal meetings with the schools in the Coquet Partnership at para. 14-19, setting out their request and rationale for the Council to initiate consultation on a proposal for a 2-tier, primary/secondary structure in the Coquet Partnership;
- (d) Cabinet note the draft proposed models of school organisation suggested as the basis for consultation;
- (e) Cabinet note that £25.5m has been proposed in the medium-term plan for investment in schools in the Coquet partnership, including for the replacement or refurbishment of the buildings of James Calvert Spence College (JCSC) at Acklington Road site;
- (f) Cabinet note that the outcomes presented to Cabinet may include a recommendation to permit the publication of statutory proposals for relevant schools in the Coquet Partnership; and
- (g) the report of the FACS OSC be noted.

3. REPORT OF THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION

Bus Service Improvement Plan and Enhanced Partnership

The report set out the details of the recent Government announcement relating to indicative allocations for the delivery of regional Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs) and provided an update on the development of the Enhanced Partnership (EP) for buses in the North East and its implications on the Council's future responsibilities (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix B).

Mr O'Farrell detailed the main points of the report and Councillor Ploszaj added that this was an ambitious project to subsidise travel and provide network improvements, develop some tourist routes and introduce a fares cap in the more rural parts of the County. The Council needed to be tough in the negotiations to secure the best deal for Northumberland and the delegation would ensure that matters could be progressed quickly.

Members spoke in support of the report and agreed on the need for rural communities to have better public transport, including better connections from the coast to the national park to meet the visitor need.

The Leader welcomed the report and agreed with the comments which had been made. The recent coastal summit had shown that local residents found the influx of visitor traffic difficult to deal with and rural public transport services were very important. He was particularly enthused by the proposals for small park and ride schemes.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) Cabinet welcome indicative allocation awarded by the Government to the delivery of the BSIP for the North East;
- (b) the Leader be authorised, in both his role as Leader and Northumberland's representative on the North East Joint Transport Committee, in consultation with the Interim Executive Director of Regeneration, to negotiate and agree the draft Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme(s) on behalf of the Authority whilst recognising that the Council's current responsibilities will not be diminished by the governance of this EP; and
- (c) Cabinet receive further reports on the progressive development of the Enhanced Bus Partnership and its associated schemes as the implications for Northumberland and the Council emerge.

4. REPORT OF THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND S151 OFFICER

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 via email on 1 April 2022 (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix C).

RESOLVED that:-

4.1 Winter Weather Stations

RESOLVED that Cabinet approve a proposal to replace end of life equipment at the Council's existing winter service weather stations and at the same time create four new weather forecasting sites at a total cost of £400,000 funded through the Winter Services Weather Stations Budget allocation included in 2022-23 of the Council's Medium Term Plan 2022-26.

4.2 Strategic Regeneration Projects

RESOLVED that :

- Cabinet approve the reallocation of the specified sums within the Strategic Regeneration Projects Budget as per Table 1 in paragraph 6.3 of the report to the unallocated sum to facilitate greater flexibility in responding to emerging regeneration initiatives and opportunities.
- Cabinet approve the re-profiling of the Strategic Regeneration Projects Budget as set out in Table 2 in paragraph 6.7 of the report whilst reaffirming the criteria by which the funding from the Budget will be released as set out in paragraph 7.10.

4.3 Port of Berwick Pilot Boat

RESOLVED that Cabinet approve the provision of a one-off grant for £60,000 funded from the Strategic Regeneration Budget to the Berwick Harbour Commission for the purchase of a replacement Pilot Boat that will safeguard the commercial operations of the Port of Berwick.

4.4 Great Northumberland Forest

RESOLVED that Cabinet accept a grant of £1.6m from the national Nature for climate Fund into the Medium Term Financial Plan. The grant will be paid in three equal instalments over the next 3 years and used to fund the Great Northumberland Forest initiatives detailed below.

4.5 Fire and Rescue Risk Critical Equipment

RESOLVED that Cabinet approve the re-profiling of the FRS Risk Critical Equipment project in the Medium Term Plan as set out in paragraph 9.6, noting that there is no overall increase to the total budget line.

4.6 Newbiggin Sports and Community Hub

RESOLVED that Cabinet approve an increase in the overall budget provision for the Newbiggin Sports and Community Hub project of £60,000 to a total of £1,915,000 to be funded via a Revenue Contribution to Capital (RCCO) from the Communities Together revenue budget following receipt of funding from North of Tyne.

5. REPORT OF THE INTERIM SENIOR SERVICE DIRECTOR

Nominations to Outside Bodies

Cabinet was asked to agree its nominations to outside bodies detailed in Appendix D (copy attached to the signed minutes).

RESOLVED that the nominations detailed in the report be approved, subject to the nominations for the Joint OSC for the NE ICS and North and Central ACPs being Councillors Ezhilchelvan, Nisbet and Jones, with Councillor Flux as the alternate, and the nomination for the Woodhorn Charitable Trust being Councillor Flux.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....