

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

At a meeting of the **Cabinet** held at County Hall, Morpeth on Tuesday 13 December 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

Binjal, S.	Monitoring Officer
Bradley, N.	Director of Adult Social Services
Hadfield, K.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Hunter, P.	Interim Senior Service Director
Kingham, A.	Interim Joint Director of Children's Services
McMillan, S.	Assistant Service Director
Murfin, R.	Interim Executive Director of Planning & Local Services Regeneration, Commercial & Economy
O'Farrell, R.	Interim Chief Executive
Taylor, M.	Interim Executive Director for Communities and Business Development
Willis, J.	Interim Executive Director of Finance and S151 Officer

Ch.'s Initials.....

One member of the press was present.

67. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 17 November 2022, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

68. REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Council-owned Company Governance Framework

The report proposed adoption of a series of principles and expectations in relation to the Council's companies and the governance relationship between the Council and those companies. These steps were to address the recommendations of the Caller Independent Governance Review in the immediate term, and to provide the foundation for decision making and the development of a comprehensive company governance framework for companies wholly or partly owned by Northumberland County Council (NCC) and alternative delivery vehicles (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix B, along with the report of the CSEG OSC circulated at the meeting).

The report was introduced by the Leader. He referred to the report from Scrutiny and the comments which had been raised around member representation on the Board, proportionality and whether remuneration was appropriate. He felt that it was in the circumstances. Scrutiny had asked for regular updates and he supported the idea that Advance came to provide those updates to members.

RESOLVED that Cabinet establish a governance framework for companies that are wholly or partly owned by the Council by:

- (a) approving the set of principles and expectations in relation to the governance of the Council's interests in companies as set out in Annex A;
- (b) authorising the Shareholder Representative in consultation with the Leader and Monitoring Officer, having regard to those principles and expectations, to:
 - i. develop a specific governance framework in respect of companies that are wholly or partly owned by the Council for consideration by Cabinet and, where applicable, by Council at the earliest opportunity; and
 - ii. make appointments to directorships of any Council owned company board until such time as that specific governance framework is adopted; and

(c) the report of the CSEG OSC be noted.

69. REPORT OF THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND SECTION 151 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 (CSG) via email on 4 November 2022 (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix D).

69.1 Bamburgh Play Park

RESOLVED that Cabinet approve a contribution of £10,000 to Bamburgh Parish Council from the Parks Enhancement Capital Programme for 2022/23 towards the provision of a new refurbished play park in Bamburgh at an overall cost of £120,000.

69.2 Isabella Heap Park, Blyth

RESOLVED that Cabinet

- Accept the Government's Levelling Up Parks Fund grant of £85,000 and other contributions of £13,500 in respect of an overall park improvement scheme costing £123,500, and add to the 2022/23 capital programme; and
- Approve capital expenditure of £25,000 from the Parks Enhancement Capital Programme for 2022/23 in respect of NCC's contribution to the scheme.

69.3 Hexham High Streets Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ)

RESOLVED that Cabinet

- Approve an additional allocation of £1,117,254 from the Strategic Regeneration Projects budget line for 2023/24 within the Council's Capital Programme for the Hexham HSHAZ schemes and The Shambles.
- Approve delegated authority to the Interim Chief Executive to execute contracts up to the value of £2,399,236 for delivery of the public realm improvements, subject to confirmation of associated funding being in place and the appropriate procurement processes being followed.

69.4 Queen Elizabeth II Park Commemoration Schemes

The Leader commented on the fantastic response from the public to the consultation on this

RESOLVED that Cabinet approve expenditure of £370,175 as summarised in the table at the end of Section 8 of the report, to create a number of park commemoration schemes that can form a countywide celebration of the life of the late Queen Elizabeth II. The

proposed schemes relate to improved access to the outdoors/countryside, such as new/improved footpaths and bridleways, enhancements within parks and new tree/community woodland planting activity and will be funded in 2023/24 as part of the new MTFP budget setting process.

The Leader and Mr O'Farrell had to leave for another meeting at this point. Councillor Wearmouth took the Chair.

70. REPORT OF THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND SECTION 151 OFFICER

Setting of the Council Tax Base 2023-24

The report advised Cabinet of the tax base calculation for 2023-24 for all domestic properties liable to pay council tax. The tax base had to be set by the statutory deadline of 31 January 2023 (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix A).

The S151 Officer highlighted the key points of the report. She referred to forthcoming legislation regarding the ability to charge a council tax premium for second homes. This had not been enacted yet so it had not been reflected in the council tax base figures.

The Monitoring Officer reminded members that a recorded vote should be taken whenever a key budget decision was made. The Constitution would be amended to reflect this requirement. The recorded vote was taken on the report's recommendations and the votes were cast as follows:-

FOR:7

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

AGAINST:0
ABSTENTIONS: 0

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that the council tax base for 2023-24 as detailed within Appendix A equating to 110,152.30 Band D equivalent dwellings, be approved. This was an increase of 1,546.81 Band D equivalents from 2022-2

71. REPORT OF THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND SECTION 151 OFFICER

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

The report informed Cabinet of the current financial position for the Council against the Budget for 2022-23 (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix C).

The report was introduced by Councillor Wearmouth who highlighted that the significant level of overspend at the start of the financial year was now being brought under control and he expected this progress to continue. Much of the pressure had been inflation related. The S151 Officer reported that officers were continuing to monitor the position, which had improved further since the end of September. The overspend currently was around £3m but officers continued to look at ways of dealing with this before the end of the financial year. She was reasonably confident that a balanced position would be achieved once all of the corporate items had been worked through. Progress reports would continue to be brought.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the services projected overspend of £1.457 million and the assumptions outlined in the report be noted;
- (b) the potential gross overspend of £9.529 million after accounting for the cost of 2022-23 pay awards and anticipated energy inflation be noted;
- (c) the net forecast overspend of £4.321 million following the utilisation of the Exceptional Inflation Reserve be noted;
- (d) the switch in funding in relation to the Todstead Landslip scheme as detailed in 11.7 be approved;
- (e) net re-profiling to the Capital Programme of £95.547 million from 2022-23 to 2023-24 be approved to reflect estimated expenditure levels in the current financial year;
- (f) the new grants and amendments to existing grants at Appendix A and the required changes to the budgets be approved;
- (g) the progress on the delivery of the approved savings at Appendix B be noted;
- (h) the use of the contingency shown at Appendix Q be noted;
- (i) the use of reserves shown at Appendix R be noted; and
- (j) the virements requested by services shown at Appendix S be noted.

72. Decision taken by the Leader - Capital Investment for Schools Broadband Service Improvement

A decision was taken by the Leader under Finance and Contract Rules to proceed with contracting with the proposed supplier in order to secure broadband services for schools. This was now reported to Cabinet for information (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix E).

Councillor Renner Thompson advised that schools were free to choose their own broadband provider and had chosen to stay with the County Council,

who had secured a good deal. This would be life changing for some of the more rural schools without adequate internet access and hopefully, local communities could also benefit where fibre optic lines were being put in.

RESOLVED that the decision be noted.

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

74. REPORT OF THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND SECTION 151 OFFICER

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

The report informed Cabinet of the current financial position of its trading companies and of any relevant issues arising (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix F, coloured pink and marked Not for Publication).

The S151 Officer updated members on current outstanding claims against the Council and advised that a counter claim had been launched. She was reasonably confident that the final costs associated with this would be within the financial envelope already agreed and set aside.

Councillors Riddle, Renner Thompson and Watson did not take part in this matter and did not vote.

RESOLVED that the recommendations detailed in the report be agreed.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....