

## NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

### CABINET

At a meeting of the Cabinet held at County Hall, Morpeth on Tuesday 11 July 2023 at 10.00 am.

### PRESENT

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

### CABINET MEMBERS

Horncastle, C.	Stewart, G.
Jones, V.	Watson, J.
Pattison, W.	Wearmouth, R.
Renner Thompson, G.	

### OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Bradley, N.	Executive Director for Adults, Aging & Wellbeing
Gerrard, S.	Director of Law and Corporate Governance
Hadfield, K.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Hunter, P.	Director of Strategy and Communications
Kingham, A.	Executive Director for Children, Young People & Education
Masson, N.	Deputy Monitoring Officer
Neilson, S.	Executive Director for Place and Regeneration
O'Neill, G.	Executive Director for Public Health (DPH), Inequalities & Stronger Communities
Paterson, Dr H.	Chief Executive
Willis, J. (Remote)	Executive Director for Resources & Transformation (S151)

### 13. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ploszaj and Riddle.

### 14. MINUTES

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on Tuesday 13 June 2023, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

## 15. REPORT OF THE COMMUNITIES AND PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

### Firefighters Decontamination

Cabinet was asked to consider a report from the Committee on the above (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix A).

Cabinet fully supported the proposals.

**RESOLVED** that that Cabinet approve the recommendation of the Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee that financial support for the recommendations made by the fire and rescue service be provided to ensure that Northumberland leads the way to reduce the risk of contamination and support fire and rescue personnel.

## 16. REPORT OF THE LEADER

### District Heating Update and Partnership Procurement

The report provided a summary of the progress made across the eight District Heating studies completed for the county, feedback on proposed delivery models for the schemes and seek approval to proceed with the next phase of activity (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix B).

The report was presented by the Leader.

Councillor Wearmouth supported the initiative and felt this was a great opportunity for Northumberland, where sources of industrial heat were readily available to access. This would allow the supply of clean and green energy and insulate the Council from the effects of external factors such as the war in Ukraine.

Councillor Horncastle was fully supportive. There were many opportunities around the County to harness these types of energy.

**RESOLVED** that:-

(a) Cabinet agree that the council's preferred delivery option for District Heating is Model 3 (Supply Framework). Under this model the Council will enter into a framework agreement with a Heat Provider and agree a form of connection and supply agreement to be used for the supply of heat to the Council across the eight towns, namely Alnwick, Ashington, Berwick, Blyth, Cramlington, Hexham, Morpeth and Prudhoe on a town-bytown basis as the schemes go-live;

(b) Cabinet approve a procurement exercise to select and appoint a legal and commercial advisor to support the procurement activities needed to appoint a Heat Provider. The forecast cost of the external legal and commercial advisor support is ~£160,000, which it is expected will be 100% funded through the NELEP Energy Accelerator Fund at no additional cost to

NCC. In the unlikely case that the NELEP do not fund the project a separate request for NCC to provide funding will be made;

(c) Cabinet resource and undertake a procurement exercise to appoint a Heat Provider;

(d) Cabinet agree to the inclusion of the council's future heat load to be in scope for commercially viable District Heating schemes in each of the eight locations, provided the commercial, economic and net zero tests are met by the Heat Provider; and

(e) the timescales for delivery given market competition, be noted.

## 17. REPORT OF THE LEADER

### **Northumberland Stewardship and Rural Growth Investment Programme – Nature Recovery Response**

The report outlined the Council's role in leading the region's response to nature recovery as set out in the North East Devolution Deal and, within this context, seek consideration to the declaration of an ecological emergency in Northumberland (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix C).

The report was presented by the Leader. The investment programme would provide funding to help the Council meet its obligations to encourage and support people to move forward.

Councillor Watson supported this and felt that the report sent the message that the Authority took this seriously. He suggested that a progress report come back in six months, which was seconded by the Leader.

Councillor Wearmouth commented this was another example of where the Authority could lead on the rural agenda. It linked in with the £9m investment plan for rural initiatives and he looked forward to seeing it being taken forward.

Councillor Renner Thompson welcomed the funding for the Northumberland Coast AONB. This was another example of Northumberland leading the way. The Government was very interested in what Northumberland was doing and the Great Northumberland Forest was a great example of this.

The Leader commented that one of the recommendations to come from the Farming Group was to have a conference with Defra to see how the Authority could move the agenda forward with farmers. He hoped that Lord Benyon would visit in early Autumn and meet some of the members of the Farming Commission.

### **RESOLVED** that:-

(a) Cabinet accept, in principle and subject to the approval of the North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) Cabinet, the role of leading the

development of the statutory North of Tyne Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) on behalf of the Combined Authority;

(b) Cabinet endorse the Council's role as accountable body for the participation of the English part of the Borderlands area in the Government's Local Investment in Natural Capital (LINC) programme;

(c) Cabinet accept the anticipated grant awards of £0.285 million and £1.000 million respectively for the development of the North of Tyne LNRS and the delivery of the Borderlands LINC into the Council's revenue budget;

(d) Cabinet agree to declaring an ecological emergency to further strengthen the Council's commitment to rural stewardship and to demonstrate the significant role of nature recovery in mitigating the climate emergency;

(e) Cabinet develop a response, within the context of our Climate Change Action Plan, to the ecological emergency using our new obligations under the Environment Act 2021 as a framework; namely the development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy; the strengthened duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity with a requirement to publish action plans and progress reports; and the introduction of mandatory biodiversity net gain in the planning system; and

(f) A progress report be made to Cabinet in six months.

## **18. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES**

### **Asset Management Framework**

The report provided Cabinet with information relating to the new Asset Management Framework for 2023-2026 that has been developed to guide decision making and clearly outline the strategic plans for the estate to 2026 (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix D).

The report was presented by Councillor Wearmouth and he detailed the key points.

**RESOLVED** that:-

(a) Cabinet note the purpose and content of the Asset Management Framework for 2023-2026; and

(b) Cabinet agree to:

- The new Asset Management Framework; as attached at Appendix 1 – and
- Receive further updates on the delivery of the Asset Management Framework on a quarterly basis.

## **19. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES**

### **Financial Performance 2022-23 – Final Outturn (subject to audit)**

The report presented the final outturn position (subject to audit) for the Council against the Budget for 2022-23 (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix E).

The report was presented by Councillor Wearmouth.

The Leader commented on the overspend of £2m in the SEND budget around transport and asked Councillor Renner Thompson how this would be dealt with. Councillor Renner Thompson reminded members that the school transport review had recently been approved and as a result an independent team of travel experts had been brought in to support SEND pupils where appropriate to use public transport. Families who wanted to transport their children themselves had been given greater financial support and a pilot scheme was running on devolving transport funding to schools to co-ordinate their own transport.

### **RESOLVED that:-**

#### **(a) Cabinet approve:**

- the new grants and amendments to existing grants at Appendix A and the required changes to the budgets.
- the net re-profiling to the Capital Programme of £23.940 million from 2022-23 to 2023-24 to reflect expenditure levels in the financial year; and .

#### **(b) Cabinet note:**

- A balanced position following a transfer of £5.916 million to the General Fund, after the transfers to Earmarked Reserves agreed as part of the Provisional Outturn report at the Cabinet meeting on 9 May 2023.
- that this final outturn is based on the draft Statement of Accounts and is subject to external audit.
- the delivery of the approved savings at Appendix B.
- the use of the contingency shown at Appendix Q.
- the use of reserves shown at Appendix R. • the virements requested by services shown at Appendix S.

## **20. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES**

### **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 (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix F).

**RESOLVED** that:-

**(a) Children’s Residential Homes:**

a) Cabinet approve the reallocation of capital funds of £1.260 million in 2023-24 from Black Close House to purchase six private residential properties which will support the development of multi-building children’s residential homes in Northumberland.

b) Cabinet approve that delegated authority is given to the Executive Director for Children, Young People and Education to enter into a contract(s) for the acquired units as and when they are identified up to the approved budget limit.

**(b) BT Openreach Gainshare receipt**

a) Cabinet approve the receipt of BT Openreach gainshare funding amounting to £2.145 million.

b) Cabinet approve the addition of £2.145 million to the Council’s capital expenditure budget in 2023-24 to be split as follows:

- i) Repayment to Building Digital UK (BDUK) of £0.989 million (46.11% of the total gainshare receipt) as per terms of the Contract; and,
- ii) £1.156 million into Community Broadband in respect of enabling additional premises to access the £2,500 top up voucher to help provide gigabit connectivity in the hardest to reach areas

**(c) Levelling Up Funding for Rapid Electric Vehicle (EV) Chargers:**

a) Cabinet approve the receipt of Levelling Up funding amounting to £0.453 million awarded to the Council for the provision of ten new rapid EV chargers to be delivered between April 2023 and March 2025, split as follows: £0.347 million in 2023-24; and, £0.106 million in 2024-25.

b) Cabinet note the match funding NCC contribution of £0.050 million (10%) from the existing capital allocation in the Climate Change Capital Fund in 2024-25, creating a total budget of £0.503 million.

**(d) Alnwick Playhouse – Replacement of Lighting Rig:**

a) Cabinet approve the creation of a new capital project in 2023-24 for the installation of a new lighting rig at Alnwick Playhouse to ensure that the main auditorium is fully health and safety compliant.

b) Cabinet approve the reallocation of capital funds of £0.100 million in 2023-24 from Ashington North East Quarter Redevelopment (Phase 2) to Alnwick Playhouse Lighting Rig to fund installation of the new rig.

c) Cabinet note that the Strategic Regeneration Projects budget will reallocate £0.100 million to the Ashington North East Quarter Redevelopment (Phase 2) project in 2024-25.

## 21. **REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR SUPPORTING BUSINESS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

### **Energising Blyth Programme: Levelling Up Deep Dive**

The report updated Cabinet regarding the establishment, development and delivery of the £20.71m Levelling Up Deep Dive (LUDD) funding awarded to Blyth earlier this year. The report explained how this funding would be added to the Energising Blyth programme in the town to have a catalytic impact on the town's economy and drive forward the implementation of the Blyth Town Investment Plan. The report also sought approval to accept this funding award from UK Government and to take a number of key early steps to enable the implementation of key projects (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix G).

The report was presented by Councillor Wearmouth.

Councillor Renner Thompson commented that it had been great to see in person all the work which had gone on and the impact this was having on the lives of young people.

The Leader endorsed these comments, adding that his aim now was to address some of the housing in Blyth which was not up to standard. The amount of money coming into Northumberland now from Government was the highest it had ever been.

Councillor Watson remarked on some of the projects in the report which had been achieved and he acknowledged the role Advance Northumberland had played in this as the Council's partner. It was great to see the Energy Park progressing.

Councillor Horncastle referred to the proposal to return 250 properties back to the housing stock. This was of great benefit because of the anti-social behaviour empty properties attracted so funding to remedy this problem was very welcome.

The Leader wished to place on record his thanks to Blyth Town Council for their work and support on this.

### **RESOLVED** that:-

(a) Cabinet accept the award of £20.71m Levelling Up Deep Dive capital and revenue funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and its use as follows;

- Add £19,630,000 to the Capital Programme as an identified budget allocation for the capital projects identified in this report.

- Add £1,080,000 as an identified revenue budget for the revenue funded projects and programme management arrangements outlined in this report;

(b) Cabinet note that the funding will be used to deliver new initiatives to support the delivery of the Blyth Town Investment Plan as part of the Energising Blyth Programme including 'Welcoming and Safe Blyth', 'Housing Renewal and Town Centre Living' and 'Energy Central Campus: Technical Training Kit';

(c) Cabinet approve the associated financial profiles as set out in the report fully funded by the Levelling Up Deep Dive and agree to:

- Establish a new Blyth Empty Homes Team in 2023 for two years from appointment
- Authorise the S151 officer in consultation with the Executive Director of Place and Regeneration to enter into internal grant funding agreement for the empty homes team revenue costs subject to confirmation of funding being in place and local assurance being followed
- Authorise the S151 officer in consultation with the Executive Director of Place and Regeneration to approve initial design fees up to the value of £1,993,469 across the programme
- The associated programme management and assurance arrangements to support the programme's delivery as set out in the report. This includes the appointment of a Senior Programme Officer in 2023 to support the programme funded for two years from appointment drawn from the revenue budget above.

## **22. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR LOOKING AFTER OUR COMMUNITIES**

### **Environmental Enforcement Fixed Penalty Notice and Penalty Notice Policy 2023**

The report presented the revised Environmental Enforcement Fixed Penalty and Penalty Notice Policy 2023 for consideration and adoption (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix H).

The report was presented by Councillor Stewart.

Councillor Horncastle supported this but commented that there was a lot of litter dropped which people were not held responsible for and he did not feel there were enough fixed penalty notices being issued. Regarding flytipping, he felt the message needed to be communicated that persistent offenders who went to court could receive very substantial fines or end up in prison.

Councillor Stewart responded that the Government recommendation for a FPN for flytipping was £1,000. Regarding the number of FPNs which were issued, all staff did a tremendous job, but from September the message would be reinforced through the civil enforcement officers that Northumberland was not the place to drop litter or flytip.



**RESOLVED** that:-

(a) Cabinet agree and adopt the proposed policy (See Appendix 1 to the report); and

(b) Cabinet agree and adopt the fine levels given in the schedule of the policy (see Appendix 1 to the report).

**23. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR IMPROVING PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

**Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Recovery Service for Northumberland – Permission to Award Contract**

The report provided the background to the need to provide a drug and alcohol treatment and recovery service as part of the Council’s statutory public health functions, to confirm that the procurement exercise had commenced, and sought permission to award the contract once the exercise is complete (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix I).

The report was presented by Councillor Jones.

**RESOLVED** that Cabinet approve the award of the contract to the successful contractor for £3,356,709 per annum. The maximum contract period is October 2023 – March 2030.

**CHAIR**.....

**DATE**.....