

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

At a meeting of the Cabinet held at County Hall, Morpeth on Tuesday 7 November 2023 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

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

CABINET MEMBERS

Horncastle, C.
Jones, V.
Pattison, W.
Ploszaj, W.

Riddle, J.
Stewart, G.
Wearmouth, R.

OTHER MEMBERS

Hill, G.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Bradley, N.

Executive Director for Adults, Aging
& Wellbeing

Gerrard, S.
Hadfield, K.

Director of Law and Governance
Democratic and Electoral Services
Manager

Hunter, P.

Director of Strategy and
Communications

Kingham, A.

Executive Director for Children,
Young People and Education

Neilson, S.

Executive Director for Place and
Regeneration

O'Neill, G. (remote)

Executive Director for Public Health
(DPH), Inequalities & Stronger
Communities

Paterson, Dr H.
Willis, J. (remote)

Chief Executive
Executive Director for Resources &
Transformation (S151)

Two members of the public were present.

38. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Renner Thompson and Watson.

39. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 10 October 2023, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

40. REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

North East Devolution

The report asked members to consider and determine if consent should be given to the making of an Order that would abolish the North East and North of Tyne Combined Authorities, whilst at the same time establishing a new North East Mayoral Combined Authority (Appendix A).

The Leader introduced the report. This was an important next step in the process and would bring great benefits. The Authority would lead on the environment, coastal matters and rural matters which was a big role to play. He looked forward to working together with the other Authorities for the benefit of all residents in the region.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the content of the report be noted;
- (b) Cabinet agree in principle that the Council should consent to the making of the order;
- (c) the Chief Executive be authorised, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to issue the Council's formal consent to the Secretary of State when requested;
- (d) the Chief Executive be authorised, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to finalise the terms of the side agreement regarding the support arrangements associated with these proposals; and
- (e) the Chief Executive be authorised to take all other steps necessary to implement these proposals

41. REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Setting the Scope and Targets for the Climate Change Action Plan 2024-26

Cabinet was asked to agree the scope and targets to be addressed in detail in the Council's Climate Change Action Plan 2024-26 and to ensure alignment with the Council's Environment Policy Statement (Appendix B).

The Leader introduced the report, detailing the key points. He stressed that this was not about dictating what people should do but encouraging them to think about how they could contribute.

Councillor Wearmouth commented this was an ambitious programme to tackle climate change. One of the most important reasons to do this was to create indigenous energy and to look after the climate around us to prevent it

from being subject to external factors such as the war in Ukraine and the impact of the pandemic. It was important to live in a sustainable way and the report showed that the Authority was taking these things seriously.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) Cabinet agree that the Climate Change Action Plan 2024-26 is a key element of the Council's wider Environmental Policy Statement, which commits the Council to strengthen the work being undertaken to maintain, protect and enhance the environment through a broad range of policies and activities, including active travel, nature recovery, planning, procurement, public health/disease control and general environmental services provision;
- (b) Cabinet agree that the Climate Change Action Plan will include a focus on greenhouse gas reduction and climate change resilience through nature in collaboration with the Council's strategies for wider ecology and biodiversity issues;
- (c) Cabinet agree to restate the Carbon Neutral target for the county by 2030 and clarify that it refers to carbon dioxide only;
- (d) Cabinet agree a new target to work with Government and other key stakeholders to achieve net-zero for all greenhouse gases for the county of Northumberland by 2040, a strategy for which will be developed as part of the new Climate Change Action Plan 2024-26;
- (e) Cabinet agree that the local and regional adaptation response to the risks and impacts of a changing climate be included in the Climate Change Action Plan 2024-26;
- (f) Cabinet agree a new target to become a carbon neutral organisation by 2030, a strategy for which will be developed as part of the new Climate Change Action Plan 2024-26;
- (g) Cabinet agree that the scope of the Climate Change Action Plan 2024-26 continues to only include direct, territorial emissions (i.e. those produced in Northumberland) as its focus for projects but that it should do more to raise awareness amongst stakeholders of scope 3 (indirect) emissions (i.e. those produced outside of Northumberland) and how they can be reduced; and
- (h) Cabinet agree the core structure of the Climate Change Action Plan 2024-26 including a commitment to set out a strategy for planning in relation to the climate change targets.

42. REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Strengthened Biodiversity Duty and Reporting Obligations

The report set out the Council's new obligations to take action to conserve and enhance biodiversity and to report on such actions, and proposed a 'first

consideration' of such actions as required under S.40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 as amended (Appendix C).

The Leader presented the report.

Councillor Wearmouth commented that this set the policy for the Council but also presented a real area of opportunity. There were lots of positives for the environment from this. It allowed the creation of new areas of habitat and also represented a significant financial opportunity for the County in areas of work where the Council had already taken a pioneering role, which had put the Authority in a strong early position.

RESOLVED that Cabinet accept the document attached to the report as a record of the Council's first consideration of actions the Council can take to conserve and enhance biodiversity in accordance with S.40 (1C) of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 as amended, which will then be used by Officers to develop an implementation plan.

43. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES

Approval of the Council Tax Support Scheme

The report sought approval for the local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2024-25 to continue to provide support at a maximum level of 92% of council tax liability (Appendix D).

Councillor Wearmouth presented the report. The Leader commented that additional funding had been available in the last budget for those who needed extra support, and this would again be part of next year's budget considerations.

RESOLVED that County Council be recommended to approve the Council Tax Support Scheme attached as Appendix 1 to be adopted as the Council's local scheme for 2024-25.

44. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES

Corporate Feedback Performance 2022/2023

The Annual Report reviewed the operation of the complaints process over twelve months (01.04.2022 to 31.03.2023), including statistical data, and provided the local authority with how it keeps itself informed about the effectiveness of its current arrangements for handling customer complaints. The same statutory reporting framework does not govern the Corporate Complaint process as Adults and Children's Complaints; however, it is deemed best practice to provide an analysis of Corporate Complaints received from customers (Appendix E).

Councillor Wearmouth presented the report. Whilst the report highlighted complaints, he stressed this had to be placed in context against the millions

of interactions with the public on an annual basis, and very few complaints got to the Ombudsman. This reflected well on the Council's staff.

The Leader agreed and commended the Authority for its transparency in how it dealt with these issues, which seemed to be rare.

RESOLVED that the findings of the report on complaint handling within the authority be noted.

45. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES

Corporate Performance Quarter 1 2023-24

The report provided a summary of the progress against the Council's three Corporate Plan priorities using the Council's performance at the end of Quarter 1, 2023/24 (Q1) (Appendix F).

The report was presented by Councillor Wearmouth, who highlighted the key points.

Councillor Pattison expressed support for the apprenticeship programme, particularly for graduates, and hoped to see more of that coming through.

Councillor Horncastle referred to the green indicators on items such as street cleanliness, dog fouling, green flag park status which were to be welcomed. It was good that the Administration had pledged to continue improvements to these areas. Staff were out in all weathers making sure that service standards were maintained and he asked the Executive Directors to take back Cabinet's thanks to the front line staff.

RESOLVED that progress against the three Corporate Priorities as summarised in the report be noted.

46. 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 (Appendix G).

46.1 Kylee House CCTV Upgrade

RESOLVED that:

(a) Cabinet approve the receipt of the capital grant of £0.221 million from the Department for Education (DfE); and

(b) Cabinet approve the amendment to the Capital Programme to include the funding and spend.

46.2 Replacement of Boating Pontoon in Wansbeck Riverside Park

RESOLVED that Cabinet approve the proposed spend on the Boating Pontoon and amend the Capital Programme in 2023-24. Note that the project will be wholly grant funded under an agreement with Cambois Rowing Club.

46.3 Highways Laboratory Expansion

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) Cabinet approve the expenditure of the £0.615 million which is already included in the MTFP under Highways Laboratory Expansion project; and
- (b) Cabinet note that a portion of the allocation will be slipped into financial year 2024-25. This is currently anticipated to be 50% but will be dependent on the date of approval.

46.4 North East Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) Cabinet note the agreement for the North East Joint Transport Committee (JTC) to release BSIP capital funding to assist scheme promoters with development of the programme;
- (b) Cabinet approve the BSIP capital funding to develop the “Bus Priority Infrastructure – Tranche 1” programme; and
- (c) Cabinet approve the amendment to the Capital Programme to include £0.121 million funding from Transport North East (TNE) to enable development of the BSIP Tranche 1 programme.

46.5 Parks Enhancement Capital Programme

(1) Cleasewell Hill Park

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) Approve capital expenditure of up to £0.240 million for the refurbishment scheme at Cleasewell Hill Park;
- (b) Approve the reallocation in the Capital Programme of £0.200 million from the existing Parks Enhancement Programme and £0.040 million contribution from Choppington Parish Council which has been agreed in principle subject to formal approval; and
- (c) Note that if funding of £0.040 million from Choppington Parish Council is not received works will be scaled back and expenditure will be limited to £0.200 million.

(2) Gallagher Park

RESOLVED that:-

(a) Cabinet approve capital expenditure totalling £0.019 million for car park repairs, overflow provision and fencing at Gallagher Park; and

(b) Cabinet approve the reallocation in the Capital Programme of £0.010 million from the existing Parks Enhancement Programme and £0.009 million from Cllr Robinson, Cllr Taylor, and Cllr Wilciezk's Members' Local Improvement Scheme funds.

(3) Plessey Woods – Bouldering Park

RESOLVED that:-

(a) Cabinet approve capital expenditure totalling £0.159 million for Plessey Woods Bouldering Park; and

(b) Cabinet approve the reallocation in the Capital Programme of £0.088 million from the existing Parks Enhancement Programme, £0.067 million from Section 106 contributions and £0.005 million from Cllr Robinson's Members' Local Improvement Scheme funds.

46.6 Strategic Regeneration Investment

RESOLVED that:-

(a) Cabinet accept grant funding to establish the Northumberland Stewardship and Rural Growth Investment Programme as follows, noting that the establishment of the programme and projects below was previously agreed by Cabinet in February 2023:

- Accept grant funding of £4.810 million including £2.000 million capital and £2.810 million revenue for the Northumberland Small Business Service (NSBS).
- Approve the addition of the £2.000 million capital funding to the Capital Programme in line with the three-year funding profile further in the report.
- Accept grant funding of £3.510 million including £1.543 million capital and £1.967 million revenue for the Rural Asset Multiplier Programme (RAMP).
- Approve the addition of the £1.543 million capital funding to the Capital Programme in line with the three-year funding profile further in the report.

(b) Cabinet approve the below projects and the reallocation of capital funds of £0.600 million in 2023-24 from the Ashington North East Quarter Redevelopment (Phase 2). The Strategic Regeneration Projects budget will reallocate £0.600 million to the Ashington North East Quarter Redevelopment (Phase 2) project in 2024-25. Note that the Ashington North East Quarter Redevelopment (Phase 2) does not require the funds in 2023-24 due to slippage in the project delivery.

- Approve the allocation of capital funds of £0.500 million in 2023-24 for Hexham HSHAZ Public Realm Scheme.

- Approve the creation of a new capital project in 2023-24 for the Berwick Gateway and approve the allocation of capital funds of £0.050 million in 2023-24 for the Berwick Gateway.
- Approve the allocation of capital funds of £0.010 million in 2023-24 for the detailed design of the Royal Border Bridge Floodlighting Scheme.
- Approve the allocation of capital funds of £0.020 million in 2023-24 to finalise the successful Rural Business Growth Service project.
- Approve the allocation of capital funds of £0.020 million in 2023-24 for the detailed design of the Alnwick Cobbles Streetscaping scheme.

46.7 Great Northumberland Forest Tenant Lead Pilot

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) Cabinet approve the proposed spend of £2.550 million for the Great Northumberland Forest Tenant Lead Pilot and note the funding of £2.550 million from the national Nature for Climate (NfC) fund; and
- (b) Cabinet approve the inclusion of an additional £2.550 million (2023-24 £1.500 million and 2024-25 £1.050 million) in the capital programme.

47. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTHY LIVES

Delegate Authority to Award Leisure Contract

The report sought permission to delegate authority to enable the contract award of the Northumberland Community Leisure and Well-being Service to the preferred bidder, following final evaluation by the panel (Appendix H).

RESOLVED that Cabinet delegate authority to the Executive Director of Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities in consultation with the Leader, also Portfolio Holder for Environment and Local Services, the Deputy Leader, also Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, the Portfolio Holder for Healthy Lives, the Director of Law and Corporate Governance and the Executive Director of Transformation and Resources to award and enter into a contract for the Northumberland Community and Wellbeing Service with the preferred bidder.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....