

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL
CORPORATE SERVICES AND ECONOMIC GROWTH
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the **Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in the Meeting Space, Block 1, Floor 2, County Hall, Morpeth, NE61 2EF on Wednesday, 17 November 2021 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillor D Bawn
(Chairman in the Chair)

COUNCILLORS

Beynon, J.
Dunn, E.
Ezhilchelvan, P.
Murphy, M.

Oliver, N.
Taylor, C.
Wallace, A.

OFFICERS

Hunter P
Lally D
Greally R

Hindhaugh P
Morgan E
Nicholson, S.
Roberts M

Willis J

Senior Service Director
Chief Executive
Assistant Democratic Services
Officer
Head of Procurement
Executive Director
Scrutiny Co-ordinator
Senior Climate Change and
Sustainability Manager
Executive Director of Finance
(Section 151 Officer)

ALSO PRESENT

Sanderson, G.
Wearmouth, R.

Leader of the Council
Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder
for Corporate Services

16. MEMBERSHIP

The Chairman noted that at the Council meeting on 3 November 2021, Councillor Ezhichelvan had been appointed to the Committee in place of Councillor Carr. He welcomed Councillor Ezhichelvan to the Committee.

RESOLVED that it was noted that Councillor P Ezhilchelvan had replaced Councillor D Carr on the Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

17. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor M. Robinson.

18. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 11 October 2021, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

19. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor D Bawn disclosed an interest in item 6 as he was a director of an organisation that was listed as a potential beneficiary of the Northumberland Lottery.

20. FORWARD PLAN OF CABINET DECISIONS

The Forward Plan of forthcoming Key Cabinet decisions was reported to the Committee. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix A).

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan of key decisions be noted

21. GREEN HOMES GRANT, LOCAL AUTHORITY DELIVERY PHASE 2 (LAD2) - GRANT FUNDING

Glen Sanderson, Leader of the Council presented this report to the Committee supported by Mark Roberts, Senior Climate Change and Sustainability Manager.

The Committee welcomed the report and were assured that the funding would be prioritised to the most deprived wards and in areas where take up was more densely requested. Communications had been done to publicise the funding and Councillors of those wards had been briefed on how to access the grant.

It was anticipated that the grant would help around 200 homes and the maximum funding for each household was to be £10,000.

RESOLVED that Cabinet be advised that the Committee supported the recommendations in the report, subject to consideration of the issues raised above.

22. CORPORATE PLAN REFRESH 2021-24

Glen Sanderson, Leader of the Council presented this report to the Committee supported by Phil Hunter, Senior Service Director. The Corporate Plan Refresh was to renew the plan and pick out areas where further progress was needed. There were two key visions within the Corporate Plan; supporting industry and supporting people.

The Committee welcomed this report and thanked Phil Hunter and his staff for their efforts in putting the Plan together. Members agreed that helping the most vulnerable residents in the county and local community initiatives in that area should be among the Council's priorities.

RESOLVED the Committee agreed to advise the Cabinet that it supported the recommendations in the report, subject to consideration of the issues raised above.

23. BUDGET 2022-23 AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2022-2025

Richard Wearmouth, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services and Deputy Leader of the Council presented this report to the Committee supported by Jan Willis, Interim Executive Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer.

Following the presentation, the Committee sought clarification on the following issues:

- Members were assured that uncertainties regarding inflation increases would not have an impact on short term budgetary planning, however it was unclear what the effect would be in the longer term if inflation figures continued to increase;
- with regard to Local Services, members were advised about income proposals in respect of car parking charges in tourist areas (not Town centres); charges for bulky and garden waste, and income from excess energy generated from waste sites. In response to a question about gully cleaning and neighbourhood services as a whole, the Leader confirmed that there were no plans to make staff cuts in those areas.
- there was concern regarding the impact on rising fuel costs on Council establishments, particularly schools. Members were advised that there was an in-year contingency fund available to absorb such rises in the short term;
- it was also highlighted that the Council were aiming to de-risk themselves further from fuel by becoming a net zero Council in the future.
- the cost impact of the transfer of NHS staff to the Council was not yet known, although it was expected that details would be included in the final budget proposals;

- the Deputy Leader referred to the construction of the British Volt facility at East Sleekburn and expressed his optimism regarding the positive economic impact on the county particularly in respect of job creation;
- predicting business rates was difficult as discount and relief schemes were often announced at short notice. The Council would take a prudent approach to business growth to combat this.

RESOLVED that Cabinet be advised that the Committee supported the recommendations in the report, subject to consideration of the issues raised above.

24. NORTHUMBERLAND LOTTERY ANNUAL UPDATE

Richard Wearmouth, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services and Deputy Leader of the Council presented this report to the Committee supported by Jan Willis, Interim Executive Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer and Pam Hindhaugh, Acting Head of Procurement.

The Committee acknowledged that gambling could be a problem for some individuals but were content that the necessary mitigation measures had been put in place.

It was confirmed that there were criteria that organisations needed to meet to be eligible to access lottery grants and the Council had a number of policies in place to ensure applications were appropriately considered.

The administration fee was considered acceptable however Officers could review the fee if it was felt necessary.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet be advised that the Committee supported the recommendations in the report, subject to consideration of the issues raised above.

25. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received an update on its Work Programme for the 2021/22 council year.

RESOLVED that this information was noted.

Chairman

Date