



RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The following is a record of the decisions taken at the meeting of **CABINET** held on **Wednesday 18 March 2015**.

The decisions will come into force and may be implemented from **Monday 30 March 2015** unless the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or its Committees object to any such decision and call it in.

Council Plan and Service Plans 2015 -2018

[Key Decision: CORP/A/03/15/1]

Summary

The Cabinet considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive on the Council Plan and Service Plans for 2015-18. The Council Plan is the overarching high level plan for the County Council and details Durham County Council's contribution towards achieving the objectives set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) together with its own change agenda. It has been developed at a time of unprecedented reductions in finance and also as an agenda of significant policy change over all areas of council services. It covers a three year timeframe in line with the council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and sets out how corporate priorities and key actions will be delivered to support the longer term goals set out in the SCS.

A set of draft objectives and outcomes around which the Council Plan is structured was agreed at Cabinet on 17 December 2014. The report proposed minor changes and rationalisation to some outcomes and these changes were detailed in Appendix 3 of the report.

Decision

The Cabinet:

- Agreed the content of the draft Council Plan and recommended it for approval by full Council on 1 April 2015, subject to any final minor amendments by the Assistant Chief Executive.
- Approved the content of the draft service plans, subject to any final minor amendments by the relevant Corporate Director and Portfolio Holder.

School Admission Arrangements Academic Year 2016/2017

[Key Decision: CAS/02/14]

Summary

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director, Children and Adults Services which provided details of the proposed admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for the 2016/17 academic year.

It is a mandatory requirement of the national School Admissions Code that all schools must have admission arrangements that clearly set out how children will be admitted, including the criteria that will be applied if there are more applications than places at the school (oversubscription). Admission arrangements are determined by admission authorities. The Local Authority is the admission authority for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools. All admission authorities must agree admission arrangements annually. Where changes are proposed to admission arrangements the admission authority must first consult on those arrangements. No changes to the proposed current admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools required public consultation, other than it was proposed that one school, Langley Moor Primary, had a reduction in the admission number to 30 (previously 34) for the purposes of efficient and effective curriculum delivery. The proposed admission number for each Community and Voluntary Controlled School was detailed in Appendix 2 of the report.

Last year, the government proposed specific, limited revisions to the current national School Admissions Code and, following a 10-week public consultation on the proposed changes, revised regulations and Code came into force on 19 December 2014. The main changes are related to the oversubscription criteria which are used to allocate places when there are more applications for places than those available. The changes allow admission authorities to give priority in their admission arrangements to children eligible for the pupil premium or the service premium and to give priority to children eligible for the early years pupil premium, the pupil premium or the service premium if they attend a nursery. There is no requirement for Admissions Authorities to include these changes if they do not wish to do so. Durham is already very successful at meeting parental preference and it would be unlikely that changing the oversubscription criteria would improve the percentage of first preferences met. The Council's Admissions Forum considered the government's revisions to the code but agreed that it would not be appropriate to include these changes into the Council's oversubscription criteria.

Decision

The Cabinet approved:

- The admission numbers as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report.
- The current admission arrangements as detailed in Appendix 3 of the report.

Review of Children's Centres in County Durham

[Key Decision: CAS10/13]

Summary

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director, Children and Adults Services which reported on the outcome of the consultation carried out between 31 July 2014 and 23 October 2014 on the future of Children's Centre services in County Durham and made final recommendations on the future of Children's Centre buildings and future service model.

The Early Years Strategy, agreed by Cabinet in March 2014, acknowledged the importance of the early years with a child's experiences pre-birth to the age of five having a major impact on their resilience and future life chances. In County Durham during 2013-2014, 45% of all children who were made subject of a Child Protection Plan were under 5 years old; the most significant reason for this was as a result of neglect. The impact on the development of these children is likely to be significant and necessitates a greater focus on identifying and supporting parents who are raising their children in circumstances which do not maximise their potential.

Early indications show that, in accordance with the principles contained in the Early Years Strategy presented to Cabinet in March 2014, the implementation of a more targeted approach is impacting positively on outcomes for children. However, a full review of the Children's Centre service delivery model has been required to make sure effective use is made of the Council's resources in order to achieve maximum impact.

On 16 July 2014, Cabinet agreed to consult on 2 proposals on the future of Children's Centre services:

- The Community Delivery Model
- The 43 Children's Centres and the 15 that it is proposed to retain

The One Point Service currently manages the 43 Children's Centres. Each of the centres covers a defined geographical area and provides a range of services to families within the "reach" area. The "reach" refers to the total number of children under the age of 5 who live within the geographical area covered by the centre. The 43 Children's Centres are currently grouped into 15 clusters and details of these along with the number of 0-4 year olds served, including those in the top 30% most deprived areas that are within each locality were set out in Appendix 2 of the report.

The consultation outlined two proposals:

The Community Delivery Model – Putting services closer to families

The consultation proposed the development of a Community Delivery Model which would take services closer to where children and families live and also make better use of community buildings. This model would benefit children and families by ensuring services were more easily accessible by delivering services in community venues which they may already access, for example schools, libraries, community centres and leisure centres. Implementing this model would provide a more flexible way of delivering services to meet the changing needs of communities without the current constraints of having 43 fixed Children's Centre buildings.

During the consultation, a range of stakeholders, including Area Action Partnerships, County Councillors and members of Local Advisory Boards identified and recommended community venues suitable for the delivery of Children's Centre services details of which were contained in Appendix 5 of the report. 52% of all questionnaire respondents thought there would either be no difference or a positive or very positive impact on the proposal regarding the Community Delivery Model and 48% thought there would be a negative or very negative impact. Analysis was carried out for each of the 15 cluster areas identifying the percentage of households that are within 1 mile of their nearest potential outreach venue and it was found that between 95% and 99% of all households were able to access a potential recommended community venue.

During the consultation period, a group of four pilot sites were identified to provide an early opportunity to test the Community Delivery Model and these pilots informed the development of the required agreements between the Council and school and academies. The pilots demonstrated that the new way of delivering services did not lead to a reduction in service delivery.

Children's Centres and the 15 it is proposed to retain

It was proposed to retain one Children's Centre building in each cluster, thereby reducing the number of centres from 43 to 15. These 15 centres, alongside an extensive and flexible network of community venues would deliver services across each cluster and where possible, provide a base for staff. A range of factors informed the proposals regarding which centres should be retained. Within each cluster, these factors were considered and the centre that represented the 'best fit' was proposed. The range of factors and the 15 Children's Centres proposed to retain were included in Appendix 6 of the report.

Cabinet agreed to a 12 week public consultation on the 16 July 2014 and the full consultation plan was included in the report at Appendix 7. The consultation process was scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 18 December 2014. The Board was satisfied that the process addressed equality and diversity issues and ensured all stakeholders were able to fully participate in the consultation. The questionnaire submissions and qualitative feedback from the various stakeholder meetings, together with a range of statistical data was reviewed and analysed for each of the 15 cluster areas. This analysis informed final recommendations for all of the Children's Centre clusters. The final recommendations are based on an overall analysis of all of the information and this supported 14 of the 15 original proposals.

The following conclusions were reached and informed the recommendations to Cabinet:

- There was overall support for the Community Delivery Model;
- There was broad support for 14 of the 15 Centres it has been proposed to retain;
- A robust analysis of consultation findings and data relating to each of the Children's Centre cluster areas informed the final recommendations regarding which of the 43 Children's Centres to retain;
- Programmes outlining service delivery in the proposed new model will provide assurance of ongoing provision;
- There are sufficient community venues to deliver the proposed model;
- Four pilot projects confirmed that Children's Centre buildings can remain viable in alternative use whilst Children's Centre services are delivered to the same level through community venues;
- A strengthening of a targeted approach will support improved outcomes;

- Through the local consultation processes a number of common themes have emerged, all of which can be addressed through a range of mitigating actions.

Decision

Based on the outcomes of the consultation process, Cabinet agreed the following recommendations:

1. Agreed to the implementation of the Community Delivery Model which will ensure the delivery of the full Children's Centre Core Purpose across a range of venues improving accessibility for children and families.
2. Agreed to the retention of the 15 Children's Centres set out in the table below, these recommendations have been arrived at following a full consideration of the responses received during the consultation period, a review of the data, suitability of the retained centre and available alternative community venues within those areas where the Children's Centres are proposed for transfer.

CLUSTER	CENTRE RECOMMENDED TO RETAIN:
Consett	Moorside Children's Centre
Stanley	Stanley Children's Centre
Chester-le-Street	Bullion Lane Children's Centre
Deerness Valley	Brandon Children's Centre
Durham	Laurel Avenue Children's Centre
Easington	Easington Children's Centre
Seaham	Seaham Children's Centre
Peterlee East	Horden Children's Centre
Peterlee Central	Seascape Children's Centre
Peterlee West	Wheatley Hill Children's Centre
Ferryhill	Dean Bank Children's Centre
Spennymoor	Tudhoe Moor Children's Centre
Newton Aycliffe	Newton Aycliffe Children's Centre
Bishop Auckland	Woodhouse Children's Centre
Durham Dales	Willington Children's Centre

3. Agreed to delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Children and Adult Services and the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services to determine the alternative providers for the 28 Children's Centre buildings that will no longer be designated as Children's Centres, set out overleaf:

CLUSTER	CENTRE(S) TO BE DE-DESIGNATED
Consett	Benfieldside Children's Centre Leadgate Children's Centre
Stanley	Catchgate Children's Centre Craghead Children's Centre Burnhope Children's Centre
Chester-le-Street	Pelton Children's Centre
Deerness Valley	Ushaw Moor Children's Centre Sacriston Children's Centre
Durham	Sherburn Hill Children's Centre Kelloe Children's Centre
Easington	Murton Children's Centre
Seaham	n/a
Peterlee East	Blackhall Children's Centre
Peterlee Central	Howletch Children's Centre Dene House Children's Centre
Peterlee West	Wingate Children's Centre Haswell Children's Centre Shotton Children's Centre Thornley Children's Centre
Ferryhill	Chilton Children's Centre Fishburn Children's Centre
Spennymoor	Middlestone Moor Children's Centre Cornforth Children's Centre
Newton Aycliffe	Sildon Children's Centre
Bishop Auckland	St. Helen Auckland Children's Centre Coundon Children's Centre
Durham Dales	Stanhope Children's Centre Evenwood Children's Centre Middleton-in-Teesdale Children's Centre

Proposal to Change the Age Range of Shotley Bridge Infant School from 4-7 to 4-11 from 1 September 2015 to create a Primary School and to close Shotley Bridge Junior School as a separate school on 31 August 2015 [Key Decision: CAS/06/14]

Summary

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director, Children and Adults Services which sought approval to change the age range of Shotley Bridge Infant School from 4-7 to 4-11 from 1 September 2015 to create a Primary School and to close Shotley Bridge Junior School as a separate school on 31 August 2015 taking account of the Local Authority's duties as prescribed in the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to secure sufficient places, and to secure good outcomes for all children and young people in their local area.

Discussions with Shotley Bridge Infant and Junior schools about a possible amalgamation began in November 2014.

Following these initial discussions, using delegated powers, the Corporate Director, Children and Adults Services approved the commencement of consultation on the proposal to change the age range of Shotley Bridge Infant School from 4-7 to 4-11 from 1 September 2015 to create a Primary School and to close Shotley Bridge Junior School as a separate school on 31 August 2015. Consultation was undertaken between 20 November and 23 December 2014. A full summary of the consultation responses was included in the report at Appendix 2. The large majority were in support of the proposal. After full consideration of all the responses to the consultation, the Corporate Director, Children and Adults Services published proposals to change the age range of Shotley Bridge Infant School from 4-7 to 4-11 from 1 September 2015 to create a Primary School and to close Shotley Bridge Junior School as a separate school on 31 August 2015. A statutory notice was therefore published on 8 January 2015. There followed a statutory 4 week representation period during which comments on the proposal were made. 3 responses were received by the end of the 4 week statutory notice period, 2 in support of the proposal and 1 objecting to the proposal. Those respondents supporting the proposal stated that a Primary School would benefit the children of the Infant and Junior Schools and provide continuity of leadership. The respondent objecting to the proposal did so on the grounds that it will lead to increased traffic and pedestrian congestion. These matters were referred to the Council's Highways Department.

Officers believe that educationally the proposal to change the age range of Shotley Bridge Infant School from 4-7 to 4-11 to create a Primary School and to close Shotley Bridge Junior School as a separate school is in the best interests of pupils and their families. The most recent Ofsted reports judged Shotley Bridge Infant School as "good" and Shotley Bridge Junior School as "requires improvement". Pupils at Shotley Bridge Infant School have high attainment and outstanding achievement and standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are well above average in all subjects. The proposal for one Primary School will build on this and allow for pupils' progress to be consistently monitored across Key Stage 1 and 2 as a single school.

No pupils will be displaced by the proposal. Capital funding in the region of £50,000 will be required to upgrade the ICT provision and provide appropriate signage. An additional classroom and work to improve safeguarding of pupils at the junior building will also be carried out at a cost of approximately £450,000. The School Capital Maintenance Grant allocated to the LA from the DfE would provide this funding.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed:

1. That the age range of Shotley Bridge Infant School be changed from 4-7 to 4-11 from 1 September 2015 to create a Primary School; and
2. That Shotley Bridge Junior School should close as a separate school on 31 August 2015.

Performance Management in the third quarter 2014/15

Summary

The Cabinet considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive which presented progress against the council's corporate basket of performance indicators and reported other significant performance issues for the third quarter of 2014/15 covering the period October to December 2014.

The report incorporated a stronger focus on volume measures in performance framework. Charts detailing some of the key volume measures which form part of the council's corporate basket of performance indicators were presented in Appendix 4. A corporate performance indicator guide has been produced which provides full details of indicator definitions and data sources.

The county continues to be affected by lower than average employment levels, however, there continues to be good progress made in many areas. Issues which continue to affect performance across County Durham are significant challenges in the underlying health picture in the county. The council has observed slight reductions in demand for some key areas this quarter such as planning applications, benefit claims and change of circumstances, face to face contacts, and telephone calls received and in requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act or Environmental Information Regulations. Although the number of fly-tipping incidents reported has reduced slightly from the previous quarter, volume remains high compared with the same period last year. Increased demand has been evident in the number of people rehoused and children in need referrals.

Decision

The Cabinet:

1. Noted the performance of the council at quarter 3 and the actions to remedy under performance.
2. Agreed all changes to the Council Plan outlined below:

Altogether Wealthier

- i. Delay the completion date for the County Durham Plan, due September 2014.
- ii. Provision of new car park spaces at North Bondgate due September 2015. Revised date: November 2015.
- iii. Bring empty homes in the north of the county back into use through a programme of targeted support due March 2015. Revised date: April 2015.

Altogether Better for Children and Young People

- iv. Having an integrated approach across the council, so that joint planning and delivery enables communities and individuals to optimise their health and life opportunities due September 2014. Revised date: September 2015.
- v. Adopt the Council's approach to determining the distribution and range of fixed play equipment across the county due December 2014. Revised date: April 2015.

Altogether Greener

- vi. Deliver the Waste Transfer Stations Capital Improvement Programme: Annfield Plain (Stanley) and Heighington Lane (Newton Aycliffe) due December 2014. Revised date: March 2015
- vii. Increase community ownership and involvement in the management of allotments due December 2014. Revised date: December 2015

Altogether Better Council

- viii. Deliver and complete the current accommodation programme for council buildings due February 2016. Revised date: April 2016

Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2014/15 for General Fund and Housing Revenue Account – Period to 31 December 2014

Summary

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director, Resources which provided Cabinet with an updated forecast of 2014/15 revenue and capital outturn, based on the period to 31 December 2014 for the Council's General Fund and Housing Revenue Account. The report also included the updated forecasts for the Council Tax Collection Fund and Business Rates Collection Fund.

This report updated previous information presented to Cabinet on 19 November 2014 that showed the forecasted revenue and capital outturn based on expenditure and income up to 30 September 2014 and incorporated the recommended changes to cash limits within Service Groupings agreed at that time, providing an update to these forecasts and revised forecast balances on general and earmarked reserves at 31 March 2015.

The report also provided an update on the Collection Fund in terms of Council Tax and Business Rates forecast outturn.

Revenue - Updated Forecast Based on Position to 31 December 2014

The following adjustments were made to the Original Budget that was agreed by Full Council in February 2014:

- (i) agreed budget transfers between Service Groupings;
- (ii) additions to budget for items outside the cash limit (for Cabinet approval);
- (iii) planned use of or contribution to Earmarked Reserves.

Capital

A revised General Fund (GF) capital budget for 2014/15 was agreed as at £166.292m by Council on 26 February 2014. The 2014/15 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital budget of £50.489m was also approved by Council on 26 February 2014. The Council's Member Officer Working Group (MOWG), which closely monitors the capital programme, has since recommended for approval a small number of further revisions to the capital programme, taking into account additional resources received by the authority and further requests for re-profiling as Service Management Teams continue to monitor and review their capital schemes. These revisions were included in the report.

Decision

The Cabinet:

- Noted the projected change in the Council's overall financial position for 2014/15
- Agreed the proposed 'sums outside the cash limit' for approval
- Agreed the revenue and capital budget adjustments
- Noted the forecast use of Earmarked Reserves.
- Noted the forecast end of year position for the Cash Limit and General Reserves.
- Agreed that Schools be advised of the need to have minimum and maximum balances at 31 March as detailed in paragraphs 34 to 39 of this report.
- Noted the position for the Housing Revenue Account, Capital Programme and the Collection Funds in respect of Council Tax and Business Rates.

Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2013/14

Summary

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director, Children and Adults Services which provided information in respect of the Annual Report of the County Durham Local Safeguarding Children Board. The report detailed the work of multi-agency partners to ensure effective arrangements are in place to safeguard and protect vulnerable children and young people from abuse and neglect. The report set out achievements in 2013/14 and priorities and challenges for 2015/6.

Durham Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is a statutory body established under the Children Act 2004. It is independently chaired (as required by statute) and consists of senior representatives of all the principle stakeholders working together to safeguard children and young people in Durham.

Its statutory objectives are as follows:

- Coordinate local work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- Ensure the effectiveness of its work

The LSCB Chair works closely with all LSCB partners and particularly with the Corporate Director of Children and Adult Services (under Section 18 of the Children Act 2004). Statutory Partner Agencies, which includes both all the health commissioning bodies and provider bodies, the police, probation and the council, are under a duty to co-operate with the Board and those accountabilities are defined in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013 and the NHS Accountability Framework.

The Board has no service delivery functions, however, it is required to inform (through its co-ordination and effectiveness responsibilities) the commissioning intentions of partner agencies, It is also required to monitor, quality assure and evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the services commissioned and delivered in the local area.

Working Together (2013) requires each Local Safeguarding Children Board to produce and publish an Annual Report evaluating the effectiveness of safeguarding in the local area. The Durham LSCB report, which was attached to the report as an Appendix, is also shared with LSCB partner agency senior management teams. The report sets out the achievements and progress made during 2013/14 and identifies the challenges facing the Board in 2015/16.

The LSCB continues to work on a range of issues as part of its ongoing work but has agreed to focus additional work in 2014/15 on the following priorities;

- Information sharing - as this remained a critical issue from Serious Case Reviews both national and local.
- Early Help - the Board recognized early help as the key priority area for making significant impact on outcomes for children. Working Together identifies this as an area where LSCBs need to bring more challenge to partners to demonstrate that families are receiving help at an earlier stage before matters escalate

In October 2004 the LSCB commissioned the Local government Association (LGA) to undertake a Peer Review of the LSCB to support the Board in making continuous improvement based on its self-assessment in early 2014. Following the Peer Review an action plan was developed. Specific work is ongoing to raise the profile of the board through a number of activates and in different forums. The LSCB has conducted a number of development sessions for partner agencies which has led to the strengthening of the membership and governance arrangements. A revised set of priorities, new work steams and subgroups have been agreed to take forward the ambitious work plan.

Decision

The Cabinet:

- Agreed to exercise its role in scrutinising safeguarding practice in Durham through receiving this report and thereby contributing to the governance of safeguarding.
- Noted the range of work that is taking place to safeguard children in county Durham, and the continued challenges, developments and achievements in this critical area of work.
- Noted the positive outcome of the Peer review and the work undertaken to make the improvements required.

Care Act and Adult Social Care Transformation Update

Summary

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director, Children and Adults Services which provided an update to Cabinet on the national and local developments in relation to the implementation of the Care Act and the transformation of Adult Care services. Over the past year, Adult Care services in County Durham have undergone a programme of transformational change which has now been subsumed in the preparative work for the implementation of the Care Act in April 2015. On 15th October 2014, Cabinet received a report detailing the duties and responsibilities in the Care Act 2014 and outlining how the adult social care reforms are being implemented in Durham.

The report provided an overview of the Act and other National Guidance and Regulations, explained the challenges presented by the Care Act and described the funding for its implementation.

The Transformation Strategy, was developed in line with the County Durham Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS) which informs and influences decisions about health and social care services in County Durham, so that they are focused on the needs of the people who use them and tackle the factors that affect health and wellbeing. The strategy sets out how adult care will be transformed in County Durham by March 2015. It describes how new ways of working will be improved and developed to meet the challenges of a changing environment and meet the future needs of communities. The Strategy explains that work will be undertaken in collaboration with internal and external partners to deliver changes and increase the resilience of individuals, families and communities and stimulate wider non-statutory services within the community.

To date the transformation programme within Adult Care Services has led to a number of service improvements and improved efficiencies. Over the last year by working together with health colleagues to integrate services, performance has improved in supporting people from requiring long-term care. There is a need to further encourage and embed cultural change across the whole of the Adult Care Service.

The introduction of the Care Act will lead to a potential increase in the number of self-funders (people who fund their own care) and carers that present themselves to the local authority for assessment. This will lead to additional demand on Adult Care services. A decision by the Supreme Court in March 2014 to broaden the circumstances of what constituted a Deprivation of Liberty Safeguard (DOLS) presented a significant increase in the number of DOLS cases both nationally and locally. This is expected to continue and place increasing pressures on operational teams.

There is uncertainty over the totality of the Care Act costs due to an absence of information around 2016/17 funding and beyond. Local authorities are being asked to participate in a national costing exercise to determine the potential financial impact of the proposed changes with effect from 1 April 2016. Durham has established a number of regional links in relation to the Care Act implementation and representatives from the service attend regional task and finish groups.

Since the coalition government came into power, a number of key national policies have been announced, relating to the transformation of adult social care services and these were detailed in the report. Future work will include:

- To ensure that the local authority implements the duties and requirements of the Care Act which come into force on 1st April 2015.
- Further redesign the delivery of Adult Social Care Services.
- Building on the use of new technology to allow more flexibility and responsiveness in the delivery of services to clients.
- Ensuring the duties on prevention and wellbeing run through the whole service system from information and advice to Social Care Direct through to the specialist teams.

Decision

The Cabinet noted the contents of the report and agreed to receive further updates in relation to Care Act implementation on a six monthly basis.

A690 Milburngate Bridge – Major Maintenance

Summary

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services which detailed proposals to undertake major maintenance at Milburngate Bridge and the implications this will have on the highway network. Milburngate Bridge carries the A690 over the River Wear within the City of Durham. The A690 over the bridge is the most heavily trafficked non-trunk road in County Durham carrying an average daily traffic flow of approximately 48,000 vehicles.

In 1996 Milburngate Bridge underwent a major refurbishment scheme. In 2013 it was noted that the carriageway movement joints on the bridge had failed and could be seen to be moving under heavy wheel loads. The bridge is safe and the proposed work is routine maintenance. The carriageway drainage channels on either side of the road have also been identified as beyond economic repair. Detailed inspections have been carried out which confirmed that maintenance works are required. The deck waterproofing has a service life of approximately 20 years. The existing system is approaching this 20 year limit. It is therefore proposed to replace this system as part of the maintenance scheme to minimise any further disruption in Durham City. On completion of the maintenance works the bridge should not require any major maintenance for approximately 15 to 20 years.

A number of meetings were held between officers of Neighbourhood Services, Regeneration & Economic Development and Durham Constabulary to discuss possible options and the potential impact on the road network in and around Durham City during the works.

Three options were considered which were then modelled by the Strategic Traffic team to determine the impact on traffic flows around the city. This enabled Highway Services to further develop the proposals to determine the implications of the works and the estimated durations for each option.

Option 1: Full Closure (including footways) - Estimated Duration 27 days

The work would involve a full closure of the bridge for both vehicles and pedestrians. A full diversion route would need to be identified for traffic travelling in both directions. This option would have the shortest duration of disruption (27 days) with maximum scope for slippage due to weather. Completion would be within the 6 weeks school holidays. This option was determined to be the most cost effective option however there would be no vehicular or pedestrian access across the bridge.

Option 2: One Lane Open Eastbound - Estimated Duration 40 days

Following an initial traffic modelling exercise based on school holiday traffic flows, in addition to a 75% reduction of A690 through traffic (high level estimate) the option to maintain one lane open in a westbound direction was dismissed. This was due to diverted eastbound traffic conflicting with westbound traffic at Leazes Bowl and having to give way causing extensive delays and queues.

Option 3: One Lane Open in Each Direction - Estimated Duration 43 days

This option would require the works to be undertaken in a number of phases. Although the bridge would remain open in both directions there would potentially be delays in crossing the bridge. It is therefore anticipated that some drivers will use alternative routes in order to try and avoid any disruption. This option was considered by Durham Constabulary and Strategic Traffic to be their preferred option. Effective communication will be required with all stakeholders during development of the scheme including the community and road users. Mitigation measures would be implemented to mitigate the impact on the road network during the works.

The report proposed a start date for the works of Sunday, 12th July 2015, (following the Miners Gala) with an estimated completion date of Sunday, 30th August 2015. All other planned maintenance/utility works within Durham City and its surrounding area would be programmed to ensure that further disruption to the highway network does not occur during the bridge works.

A recent inspection has potentially identified that works may be required to Claypath Bridge in 2015. A detailed survey and assessment is to be undertaken to determine the full extent of the works. If it is feasible, these works will be carried out concurrently with the Milburngate Bridge works to avoid further disruption in the future.

The scheme is expected to cost up to £1 million and will be funded from the 2015/16 LTP Highways Capital Maintenance budget.

Decision

The Cabinet approved the progression of Option 3 including engagement with stakeholders.

Colette Longbottom
Head of Legal and Democratic Services
20 March 2015