



RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The following is a record of the decisions taken at the meeting of **CABINET** held on **Wednesday 21 October 2015**.

The decisions will come into force and may be implemented from **Monday, 2 November 2015** unless the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or its Committees object to any such decision and call it in.

Welfare reform and poverty issues

Summary

The Cabinet considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive which provided an update on the government's welfare reform programme and sought approval to consult on a draft County Durham Poverty Action Plan to build a more comprehensive response to the changes to welfare and the wider poverty issues within the county.

The council has responded to welfare changes by working corporately and in partnership with a wide variety of stakeholders. A Poverty Action Steering Group was established to coordinate a broad programme of work. This has included a comprehensive communications and training programme for council staff, the use of Discretionary Housing Payments and the establishment of a Welfare Assistance Scheme. The Poverty Action Steering group has developed a draft Poverty Action Plan for County Durham which was attached to the report at Appendix 2.

The draft Poverty Action Plan includes the following proposed actions:

- To raise awareness of poverty within the council and amongst our partners;
- To enable services and partners to understand poverty and work together to help address it;
- To establish ways of monitoring how people are affected by poverty; what other issues result from poverty; and what gaps in support exist that can be addressed within the resources available;
- To focus closely on child poverty, issues surrounding credit and debt, fuel poverty, the impact of further changes to welfare and benefits, and initiatives to help people into work.

Through consultation, all partners will be encouraged to comment and contribute to the development of the plan, as this will be fundamental to its successful delivery and achieving better outcomes for the residents of County Durham.

Decision

The Cabinet:

- Noted the contents of the report and the progress being made by the Council and its partners in addressing welfare reform and the wider poverty issues in the county;
- Approved the draft Poverty Action Plan for County Durham for consultation with partners and stakeholders.

Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Review of tourism marketing activity undertaken by Visit County Durham

Summary

The Cabinet considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive which presented the key findings and recommendations of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Review Group report on tourism marketing activity undertaken by Visit County Durham (VCD).

At a special meeting of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 28 January 2015 members agreed the terms of reference for the review with the aim of investigating the performance of VCD in marketing County Durham as a visitor destination and to determine how future marketing will continue to build upon recent success. A review group of ten members was established and evidence was gathered over a period of six meetings. The review group's key findings resulted in the formulation of the following recommendations:

- In relation to the partnership approach to marketing, VCD seeks to extend its work with partner destinations and the Durham Strategic Marketing Partnership (DSMP) and also use major events to attract out of region visitors to raise the profile of the county as a visitor destination.
- That VCD continues to develop and redesign the 'thisisdurham.com' website and ensure that it remains responsive to the increasing and changing information demands resulting from developments in technology.
- That VCD continues to research and identify national marketing campaign opportunities which benefit partners within the DSMP and wider tourism industry and promote County Durham as a tourism destination.
- VCD ensures that robust performance targets and monitoring procedures for all online and offline marketing activity are in place.
- That the performance evaluation of the effectiveness of marketing activity undertaken in relation to the national marketing campaign is promoted and reported to the County Council as part of its performance management process.
- That VCD maximises all identified future marketing opportunities for 2015/16 including:

- The use of major events and developments at attractions in County Durham.
- The Northern Tourism Growth Fund, promoting northern destinations to overseas markets.
- Championing as a future priority with the NECA the importance of the visitor economy.
- That a review of this report and progress made against the recommendations will be undertaken six months after the report is considered by Cabinet.

The Regeneration and Economic Development Management Team accepted the key findings and recommendations detailed in the report which highlighted the partnership approach used by Visit County Durham working with key tourism partners nationally, regionally and locally to market County Durham as a 'Destination of Distinction' for existing and new visitors.

Decision

The Cabinet:

- Noted the recommendations in the report attached at Appendix 2 and agreed to formulate a response within the six month period identified in the report for systematic review of the recommendations.
- Agreed that the report be shared with the County Durham Economic Partnership.

Auckland Castle Update

Summary

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development which provided an update on the development of Auckland Castle as a major heritage attraction for the County.

The report outlined the Trust's wider vision as 'to develop Bishop Auckland as a vibrant destination for local people and visitors alike, with Auckland Castle at its heart'.

There are a number of different projects being pursued by the Trust and the Council is working in partnership in the delivery of each of these. The projects were described in detail in the report and include the following:

- Restoration of Castle and Scotland Wing
- The Walled Garden
- The Welcome Building and Viewing Platform
- No. 10 Market Place and No. 42 Market Place
- Backhouse Gallery
- The Queens Head and Post Chaise Hotels
- Eleven Arches
- Binchester Roman Fort
- Historic England Urban Panel Visit

Overall, it is estimated by the Trust that these schemes will cost £93m to be delivered and will create:

- 200 FTE jobs and 500+ indirect jobs;
- 300 training opportunities;
- 800 volunteering opportunities.

The Council has established a Development Team to support the Trust and help deliver their projects. The Development Team, which also includes representatives from English Heritage, has worked closely with the Trust and provided detailed advice and guidance to the Trust and their consultants on all of the schemes. In particular, there are specific areas where the Council is looking to provide further support for the Trust. These are a refresh of the Bishop Auckland Regeneration Masterplan and the provision of additional car parking spaces. The Council is now working with key partners to establish governance and project team arrangements to ensure that Bishop Auckland maximises the benefits from the significant investment by the Trust.

The first regeneration Masterplan for Bishop Auckland was approved by Cabinet in April 2012 and references the opportunities at Auckland Castle but predates the acquisition of the Castle by the Trust. The Council is reviewing and updating the document to take account of the significant change in circumstance at Auckland Castle, which was anticipated in the 2012 document, but was not clear at that point. The Council will be working with key partners, such as Historic England and the Trust, on the preparation of this document.

In January 2015 a set of Heads of Terms was agreed between the Trust and Durham County Council regarding the future management and maintenance of the North Bondgate car park. A period of public consultation showed that there was overwhelming support for the proposal to extend the car park.

The proposed cost of delivering the enlarged car park and improvements to the streetscape at North Bondgate is approximately £1,027,000. If the Council was to incur the £1.027m improvements works to enlarge the car park, the underlying cost to the Council after taking into account a contribution of up to £750,000 from Auckland Castle Trust would be circa £277,000. These costs can be met within the available £770,000 resources already allocated through the capital programme.

The land to the east of the former bus depot site is owned by Gentoo and is occupied by businesses with short term tenancies. In line with the heads of terms, the Council has sought to acquire a lease for this land to provide additional car parking. Other capital works are also proposed which include improvements from the car park to the market place. The report provided full details of the financial considerations and implications.

Decision

The Cabinet:

- a) Welcomed the significant investment and the development work being undertaken by Auckland Castle Trust;
- b) Provided delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Economic Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration to enter into legal agreement with Auckland Castle Trust over:
 - i. the use of land at North Bondgate as a car park. The terms of the agreement will be compliant with Article 53 (culture and heritage conservation) of the General Block Exemption Regulation 2014; and,
 - ii. the surrender of the existing lease on Auckland Castle Park.
- c) Provided delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Economic Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration to enter into legal agreement with Gentoo Developments regarding their land holding at North Bondgate;
- d) Provided delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Economic Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration to enter into legal agreement with the Eleven Arches Trust over the sale or lease to provide highway access to the land;
- e) Noted the additional revenue cost of £30,730 by the Council which will be accommodated within existing budgets;
- f) Noted the capital commitment of £1,529,950 by the Council from its capital programme and that an additional capital funding of £186,950 will be required to fund the proposed works in the town centre;
- g) Acknowledged the recommendations of the Urban Panel report;
- h) Endorsed the partnership model of governance to ensure that the Town benefits from the significant investment by Auckland Castle Trust.

Future DLI Museum Arrangements

Summary

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services which presented a proposal for a new approach to the storage, display and access to the Durham Light Infantry (DLI) museum collections.

Whilst recognising the current financial environment, the report proposed an alternative approach to managing the collections with the following aims:

- To ensure the collection is stored safely and appropriately
- To facilitate as wide as possible access to the collection
- To maintain a broad educational programme

The proposal was developed in conjunction with the Board of Trustees of the former DLI Regiment who are the owners of the collection but place it under the care of Durham County Council through a Deed of Trust. Given the importance of the collection any available resources must be deployed effectively in storing, conserving and displaying it.

The report proposed to relocate the DLI collection to Sevenhills at Spennymoor, to a store that is secure, environmentally controlled and suitable for the size of the collection and its anticipated growth. Sevenhills would require some modifications to ensure it has the right racking, security and environmental conditions. This would predominantly allow for suitable and safe storage to be installed into two areas, allowing the collection to be safely stored and accessed within a controlled environment. Further internal adjustments at Sevenhills would enable a new collections study area to be provided for curators, conservators and volunteers to work on the collection, and a space for visitors and researchers to access and use the collection for study and education. The use of temporary loans and exhibitions would widen access to the collection. It would be the responsibility of the Museums, Heritage and Collections Manager to seek key partnerships and loans to curate temporary exhibitions to continue to display elements of the collection and expand its access to both the public and researchers alike.

In this respect, the report proposed that a loan to Durham University, covering the remainder of the World War 1 commemoration period is entered into. This would result in the loan of part of the collection to be displayed at Palace Green Library within the city centre.

The approach detailed in the report has the opportunity to reach a much wider audience than could be hoped for at the current fixed DLI museum location. The proposals have a number of financial implications of both a revenue and capital nature which were detailed in the report. A detailed project plan will be developed to manage the appropriate consultation and potential implementation implications of the report, including staffing implications.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed:

- To the closure of the DLI museum building and movement of the collection into new storage at Sevenhills.
- That the first loan from the collection is made to Durham University and agreements to facilitate the future loan(s) are put in place.
- That Capital provision is identified for the fit-out of Sevenhills storage and for the capital grant allocation for the initial first object loan as set out in the report.
- That the Trustees of the former Durham Light Infantry are formally notified and Durham County Council continues to work with them as the project progresses.
- That wider communications with stakeholders and staff consultation is commenced and an appropriate communications plan developed.

Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy 2015-20

Summary

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director, Children and Adults Services which presented the Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy for 2015 – 2020. The Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy 2015-20 was developed by Durham County Council Public Health team on behalf of the Safe Durham Partnership. The draft strategy has gone through extensive consultation and amendments have been made to incorporate feedback received from stakeholders. The draft strategy was attached to the report at Appendix 2 and the vision of the strategy is:

To change the drinking culture in County Durham to reduce the harm caused by alcohol to individuals, families and communities while ensuring that adults who choose to drink alcohol are able to enjoy it responsibly.

Key objectives which are aligned to the Altogether themes of the County Durham Partnership underpin the strategic vision. Implementation plans will be developed and regularly monitored by the Alcohol Harm Reduction Group.

Decision

The Cabinet endorsed the Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy 2015-20.

Public Health Update Report

Summary

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director, Children and Adults Services which provided an update on national, regional and local public health developments and the delivery of the Public Health Pledge which was signed by the Council in February 2014.

The implementation of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 transferred a number of former public health responsibilities to Durham County Council from 1 April 2013 together with a ring fenced public health grant, the Director of Public Health role and associated public health staff to enable the council to discharge the new statutory duties. A three year public health contract review and procurement programme was developed in 2013 following the transfer of the services to the Council. The public health transformation programme includes a shift to closer working with communities in County Durham. This is being progressed by partnership working with Area Action Partnerships. A member of the public health team is aligned with each Area Action Partnership to provide support in the delivery of health related programmes. In addition, public health staff have developed a number of strategies to improve health in collaboration with a range of partner organisations.

Decision

The Cabinet:

- Noted the contents of the report
- Agreed to receive annual updates in relation to the transformation of the Public Health Service.

The County Durham Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2015-18

Summary

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development which sought approval of the third Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP).

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 places a statutory duty on the County Council to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) and to keep it under review. The ROWIP enables Highway Authorities to create a more modern access and rights of way network. Durham County Council has created a plan, Walk, Cycle, Ride, which contributes to wider agendas including the environment, physical activity, health, social inclusion and sustainable travel. The Plan contains a 3 year Implementation Plan which will be used to create annual work programmes.

The Draft ROWIP3 was developed in conjunction with the County Durham Local Access Forum and was available for a 4 week consultation on the County Council website and was emailed to an extensive list of stakeholders. The draft was reported to the Corporate Consultation Group which has supported this process. 24 responses to the consultation were received, and, appropriate suggestions and comments received were incorporated. The Plan's vision is 'to deliver an access network fit for the 21st Century' through six objectives as follows:

- Improve access infrastructure
- Contribute to a prosperous economy
- Promote good health
- Promote a high quality environment
- Influence travel choices
- Inspire active, confident and responsible communities

An annual work programme will be created and progress will be monitored against the action plan. The County Durham Local Access Forum will continue to act as an independent critical friend to assess progress against the Implementation Plan through regular updates and reports.

Decision

The Cabinet approved the final Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP2) 2015-2018.

Street Lighting Energy Reduction Project

Summary

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services which updated Cabinet on the Street Lighting Energy Reduction Project.

Cabinet approved the business case for this 6 year "invest to save" project on 12 December 2012.

The project involved:

- Retrofitting of existing street lights with more energy efficient LED street lights;
- Removal of street lights not required by the Street Lighting Policy where it is safe to do so; and
- De-illumination of signs where permitted under Department for Transport regulations.

The Street Lighting Policy which facilitated the removal of street lights was approved by Cabinet on 20 November 2013 following extensive public consultation. In that report it was stated that an annual update would be provided detailing performance and advising of any revisions to the scope of the project.

Street Lighting Retrofits commenced in June 2013 and have been undertaken across the County. Progress is well ahead of schedule and works have been accelerated. The Council's policy is only to remove street lights that are not required by the Street Lighting Policy where it is safe to do so. Of the removal schemes that have progressed, some have met with opposition during the consultation and officers have attended meetings to discuss the concerns raised. The Council has offered Town and Parish Councils a service level agreement to retain street lights in their areas on a fully funded basis where they have expressed concerns about their removal.

The de-illumination of signs is progressing ahead of schedule. The retrofit of bollards, pedestrian crossing and traffic signals have not progressed due to the detailed design process identifying that additional works are required and the extra cost of these works means that these retrofits no longer meet the 'invest to save' criteria.

The report noted that actual energy and carbon reduction achieved is very close to the business case target and the project is making a major contribution to the Council's target of reducing its carbon emissions by 40%.

The new energy efficient LED street lights are a significant change from the old street lights that they replace and the new energy efficient LED street lights have generally been well received by the public. Only a small number of street lighting removals have been completed to date. In addition to the Street Lighting Energy Reduction Project, the Council has a significant programme of replacing life expired columns.

Decision

The Cabinet noted the content of the report and agreed to accept a further update in 12 months.

Colette Longbottom
Head of Legal and Democratic Services
23 October 2015