



RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The following is a record of the decisions taken at the meeting of **CABINET** held on **Wednesday 15 May 2019**. The decisions will come into force and may be implemented from **Tuesday 28 May 2019** unless the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or its Committees object to any such decision and call it in.

Bishop Auckland Regeneration - Town Centre Masterplan and Heritage Action Zone

Summary

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services which provided an update on regeneration activity in Bishop Auckland. The report sought approval of the final town centre masterplan and provided an update of activity in the Bishop Auckland Heritage Action Zone.

The establishment of Auckland Castle Trust in 2012 (now rebranded as The Auckland Project) significantly changed the potential for regeneration activity in Bishop Auckland. This opportunity for change was further identified by Historic England's Urban Panel visit to Bishop Auckland in November 2014.

The work on the preparation of the masterplan commenced in 2017 and there have been two rounds of public consultation with the local community with a high level of engagement on both occasions.

The masterplan is an ambitious long-term strategic framework for the town centre which balances the needs of resident, business, visitor and investor alike, to enable the town and its community to capitalise on the opportunity presented by current and emerging developments. The masterplan aligns closely with the Council's Towns and Villages programme in actively seeking and supporting the re-use of town centre premises in the face of significant pressures on the traditional high street. Bishop Auckland's Heritage Action Zone has been established to help revitalise the town's historic centre and to help realise its potential to be a vibrant market town for both locals and visitors.

Working in partnership, Durham County Council, Historic England and the Brighter Bishop Auckland Regeneration Partnership Board are seeking to strengthen the town's economic, social and cultural regeneration through a toolbox of measures including grant aid, specialist support, guidance, public engagement and the improvement to essential infrastructure such as coach and car parking and town centre wifi.

The Heritage Action Zone will tackle heritage at risk, including the conservation area, and will look at buildings that have suffered from years of retail decline. A range of other projects are planned to help bring neglected buildings back in to use, rejuvenate public spaces, involve local people and deliver stronger planning. A programme of research, repair and regeneration is coordinated by the Heritage Action Zone Project Manager. The Project Manager will work with the partnership and local community to deliver around 50 projects.

The masterplan sets a clear strategic direction for the future of the town centre. The projects contained in the masterplan will be delivered over the next 10-15 years. Funding bids to support the delivery of the Masterplan have already commenced, such as the bid recently submitted to the Government's Future High Streets Fund focussed on developing coach and car parking capacity to meet the needs of both resident and visitor populations. The masterplan has been developed with a high level of engagement with the local community throughout its preparation.

Whilst the Heritage Action Zone was only established in May last year, it has made significant progress in implementing its Delivery Plan. Work is currently being undertaken to gain more understanding of key buildings within the centre. This increased understanding of buildings should enable the Heritage Action Zone to develop a new funding package for building owners and tenants to improve the appearance of their property. Work is underway to restore the West Mural Tower which will bring this Grade 1 listed building back into use and remove it from the Historic England at risk register.

Decision

The Cabinet:

- a) Approved the Bishop Auckland Town Centre Masterplan
- b) Noted progress being made on the Bishop Auckland Heritage Action Zone

SEND Strategy Refresh

Summary

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services which presented the refreshed strategy for supporting work across local partners for children, young people and young adults with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The refreshed strategy replaces the existing SEND Strategy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities 0-25.

This report provided an update on the joint strategic approach to SEND in County Durham across the 0-25 age range involving Health, Social Care, Education and other partners. The report reflected the work undertaken by multi-agency planning groups, including engagement with stakeholders such as Making Changes Together (the recognised parent and carer partnership for SEND provision) and the eXtreme group (a group of young people with SEND who help to inform services of their experiences of life with SEND in County Durham).

This strategy is aligned to the new Children and Young People's Strategy which was recently approved at Cabinet in February 2019. It updated the strategic direction and action of the local area partnership against the key SEND priorities and provided an update of progress of actions taken in response to the Ofsted and CQC local area inspection in late 2017.

The implementation of the SEND strategy vision is guided through a working strategic action plan, which is monitored and updated as required through the work of the Integrated Steering Group for Children and the updated governance structures for SEND.

Decision

The Cabinet:

- a) Approved the refreshed SEND Strategy;
- b) Noted that the SEND Strategy will be updated later in 2019/20 following completion of an in-depth health needs analysis which is currently underway

Bishop Auckland Town Hall: Invest to Save Cultural Development

Summary

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services which sought endorsement of the approach to refurbish and fully redefine Bishop Auckland Town Hall (BATH) into a thriving cultural hub, to grow participation in the arts and support the regeneration of Bishop Auckland and the town centre whilst returning a saving to the revenue cost for the facility.

The report outlined the intended capital works and proposes a level of borrowing in addition to the capital already available to ensure the project is truly transformational and ensures the longer-term sustainability of the venue. On this basis, the project is presented as an "invest to save" project.

Bishop Auckland Town Hall is a Grade 2 listed building which has long been established as a civic building within Bishop Auckland. The building currently functions as both a library and civic venue, incorporating a small gallery, theatre space and café. The library has poor usage, arts programming is limited by the facilities available and hires have been ad-hoc. With a 2018/19 net revenue budget of £472,426 made up from £141,953 income and £614,379 expenditure this makes the venue one of the Council's most heavily subsidised leisure buildings; mainly as a result of poor income levels resulting from poor level of facilities.

Bishop Auckland is also experiencing a significant period of change, mainly as a result of the activities of the Auckland Project; most of which (Auckland Castle, Spanish Gallery, Mining Art Gallery and Tower) are developing within the immediate vicinity of BATH.

The report proposed investment to refurbish the facilities, creating a more vibrant cultural offer capable of serving both the local community and growing visitor numbers.

This will be delivered through a capital scheme to refit the theatre space with new more comfortable seating, introducing quality screening facilities, moving the café to street level and repositioning and modernising the library and gallery spaces, whilst at the same time facilitating a small retail space for let. This will facilitate a change in the nature and scope of the programme and usage, driving revenue spend and allowing for more efficient operational costs. Ultimately, driving the net revenue cost down by £135,498 in year one, rising to circa £183,567 by year three. The report set out the business case for an investment of £1,525,950.

Decision

The Cabinet approved:

- a) The approach to the redevelopment of Bishop Auckland Town Hall.
- b) The proposed scope of refurbishment to Bishop Auckland Town Hall, the case for delivery, and, that the capital scheme is developed utilising the current capital budget of £1,194,359 with an additional £331,591 financed on an “invest to save” basis from the additional income generated.
- c) That existing and local user views are built into future programming of the facility.

Schools 20 mph Part-Time Speed Limits Project – Update Report

Summary

The Cabinet considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration and the Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services which provided a final update on the Schools 20 mph part-time speed limits project.

On 17 December 2014 Cabinet approved the Schools 20 mph Part-Time Speed Limits Project. This involved introducing 20 mph part-time speed limits or zones on main and distributor roads around 33 schools with the highest accident rates. The project was funded by a one-off Public Health Grant of £952,850 and was complemented by a revenue budget to help deliver road safety education and social marketing. As the project was progressing under budget on 11 May 2016 Cabinet approved using the underspend to expand its scope to include a further 33 schools. In addition, a further 12 schools in close proximity to those prioritised for funding have been included where it was practical to do so. This brings the total number of schools funded by Public Health Grant to 78.

These schemes have now been successfully introduced both on time and under budget. There is an underspend of £106,000 and Cabinet were asked to recommend that it be used to expand the scope of the project further to include the next six schools on the prioritisation list, namely

1. Shotton Primary School, Shotton Colliery;
2. St. Helen Auckland Community Primary School, St Helen, Auckland;
3. St. Margaret’s C of E Primary School, Durham;
4. Benfieldside Primary School, Consett;
5. St. Patrick’s RCVA Primary School, Langley Moor; and
6. Brandon Community Primary School, Brandon.

The prioritisation list was produced in 2016 and was used to select the additional 33 schools using criteria developed in consultation with the Scrutiny 20mph Working Group.

The Council has always made clear that further schemes can be added to the project where fully funded by local Councillors, Area Action Partnerships, Schools and Town/Parish Councils. 31 schemes have been completed to date through these funding sources and a further 15 are in development.

Decision

The Cabinet:

- a) Noted the contents of the report
- b) Approved that the underspend of £106,000 be used to fund schemes at the next six schools on the prioritisation list in 2019/20 which were identified in the report.

North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2019-24

Summary

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services which sought Cabinet approval for the formal adoption of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding National Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2019-24.

The North Pennines AONB covers part of County Durham, Northumberland and Cumbria and is one of 46 areas in England, Wales and Northern Ireland designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (1949) for the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty of the landscape, its biodiversity and cultural heritage.

Under Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act (2000), Durham County Council, and the other four relevant authorities (Carlisle, Eden, Northumberland, and Cumbria) have a statutory duty to act jointly to prepare, and every five years re-issue, a management plan for the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

The AONB Management Plan is a plan for the area, and many organisations, individuals and communities will have a role in implementing it. It focuses on landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and cultural heritage, articulating why the area is special and presenting a series of actions and desired outcomes. Its functions include providing some of the evidence required to support policies in local development plans and other strategic documents and assisting with securing funding for project implementation. It does not include policies, but rather it informs and guides local authority (and other) policy in relation to the AONB.

The first statutory Management Plan for the North Pennines was published in 2004 and reviewed and reissued in both 2009 and 2014.

It was recognised that the period ahead, (2019-24) may bring with it considerable change not just from the proposed Brexit, and its impact on agriculture, but also the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan, and the current national Protected Landscapes review. A review of the Plan is therefore timely.

A Draft Plan 2019-24 was prepared by the AONB team and approved by the AONB Partnership for release as a consultation version in December 2018. The AONB Partnership comprises a wide range of public, private and community organisations, including Durham County Council Portfolio Holder representation.

There was extensive consultation on this draft plan, with a wide variety of organisations invited to make comment as well as press and social media announcements and encouragement to complete online surveys. There was very strong support overall and from approximately 800 comments 234 revisions were made; these amendments were subsequently endorsed by the AONB Partnership in late February 2019, to move to formal consideration by the partner Councils. For Durham County Council, feedback was given to ensure full alignment with the emerging County Durham Plan, and the consultative draft was amended to achieve this.

Decision

The Cabinet approved the adoption of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2019-24.

Helen Lynch
Head of Legal and Democratic Services
17 May 2019