

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Cabinet** held in **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham** on **Wednesday 12 February 2020** at **10.00 am**

Present:

Councillor S Henig (Leader of the Council) in the Chair

Cabinet Members:

Councillors A Napier (Deputy Leader of the Council), J Allen, O Gunn, L Hovvels, C Marshall, A Patterson, K Shaw, B Stephens and A Surtees

Also Present:

Councillors J Atkinson, D Bell, J Blakey, J Clare, R Crute and J Shuttleworth

1 Public Questions

There are no public questions.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations.

4 Medium Term Financial Plan 2020/21 to 2023/24 and Revenue and Capital Budget 2020/21 [Key Decision: CORP/R/19/01]

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided comprehensive financial information to enable Cabinet to agree the 2020/21 balanced revenue budget, details of significant investments in key frontline services, an outline Medium Term Financial Plan MTFP(10) 2020/21 to 2023/24 and a fully funded capital programme (for copy see file of minutes).

In presenting the report the Corporate Director of Resources advised that the figures were based on the provisional financial settlement. The final settlement which was due to be released the following day had been delayed, however he did not expect it to change. The Corporate Director thanked staff and members for their assistance in bringing the report together.

Members noted that the provisional settlement provided some additional financial resources after a decade of austerity affecting Councils in the North-East in particular. The Council was in a position to provide additional one-off investments of £20m towards priority frontline services as well as further investments in towns and villages because of careful management of its finances during this period.

The Council continued to demonstrate its commitment to Children's Services with an additional investment totalling £2m, but it was hoped that the Government would also do so as part of its 'levelling up' Agenda.

Members were concerned that the Fair Funding Review had been delayed until at least 2021/22, and referred to the continued unfairness in the distribution of funding. Lobbying of the Government would continue in this regard.

Cabinet members thanked the Corporate Director of Resources, and officers for their careful management of the budgets.

Resolved

Upon a recorded vote being taken Cabinet unanimously agreed to recommend to full Council, approval of the recommendations set out in the report.

5 School Admission Arrangements Academic Year 2021/22 [Key Decision: CYP/03/2019]

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services which requested Cabinet to consider and approve the proposed admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for the 2021/22 academic year (for copy see file of minutes).

Members noted that the proposed arrangements ensured that children were provided a place at one of their preferred schools, and were pleased to note the high percentage of pupils offered a place at their first choice of school.

Resolved

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

6 Council Activity Report

The Cabinet considered a report of the Chief Executive which provided an update on work to support some of the Council's key priorities (for copy see file of minutes).

Members were pleased to note the progress with development of the Council's strategic investment sites and the contribution they made to the economy in the County and for the region, attracting inward investment and the creation of high-quality jobs.

The report also provided details of the range of initiatives to support those who were homeless or at risk of losing their homes. Members stressed the importance of continuing to review and develop these initiatives.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

7 Climate Change Emergency Response Plan

The Cabinet considered a report of the Interim Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services which sought approval of the Climate Change Emergency Action Plan (2020-22) (for copy see file of minutes).

Members conveyed their thanks to everyone who had taken time to engage in consultation to develop a Plan which could secure grants to a total of £50m for investments towards tackling climate change.

Members invited Councillor Clare, Council Climate Change Champion to present the Plan, and the actions and priorities to tackle both the Council's and County Durham's contribution to climate change, which were informed by feedback from the 2019 Climate Emergency consultation. In presenting the Plan Councillor Clare applauded the work of Cabinet members and officers.

Members welcomed the report. The response to the consultation demonstrated that the County's residents not only supported the Plan but wanted to be actively involved in taking it forward, and it was pleasing that the importance of engaging with young people had been reflected.

The point was made that the Government did not recognise County Durham as a rural County which was reflected in the levels of grant funding. The Government would be lobbied to ensure that the positive contribution that the rural areas of County Durham made in terms of climate change was recognised in national climate emergency plans.

Resolved

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

8 Indices of Deprivation 2019 Summary for County Durham

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided key messages and selected analyses for County Durham for the recently released Index of Deprivation 2019 (ID2019) from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The report sought approval for the report to progress to Partnership Boards, for information and update, and, to be disseminated further as appropriate (for copy see file of Minutes).

Members were concerned with the increased levels of deprivation as a result of a decade of austerity measures imposed by Government policy, which had affected all Councils in the region. A wider analysis was being undertaken of the impact of austerity on the Council's vulnerable residents and communities, but ultimately this should be addressed by the Government in the Fair Funding Review.

The statistics were very stark and behind the figures were struggling families and children living in poverty without the opportunities that children in wealthier areas had, and it was hoped that this regional inequality would also be addressed by the Government as part of its 'levelling up' Agenda.

Resolved

That the recommendations in the report be approved.