

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Cabinet** held in **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham** on **Wednesday 16 March 2022** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor A Hopgood (Leader of the Council) in the Chair

Cabinet Members:

Councillors R Bell (Deputy Leader of the Council), T Henderson, S McDonnell, E Scott, P Sexton, J Shuttleworth and M Wilkes

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor James Rowlandson and Councillor Alan Shield

Also Present:

Councillors J Blakey, I Cochrane, S Deinali, D Freeman, C Hood and G Hutchinson

1 Public Questions

There were no public questions.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations.

4 Feasibility Study Outcomes: Refurbishment and Re-use of the Former DLI Museum and Art Gallery Building at Aykley Heads [Key Decision: REG/02/22]

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which detailed the outcomes of the further feasibility studies that have been undertaken following agreement by Cabinet in September 2021 to consider the options for the refurbishment and reopening

of the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery (DLIMAG) and grounds. The report set out an approach to bring it back into use as an exhibition centre, gallery, and café venue with appropriate reflective and contemplative grounds (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Councillor Scott in moving the recommendations advised that the swift delivery of the comprehensive feasibility study into the options demonstrate the clear commitment of Cabinet to deliver on the promises it had made to carefully consider the re-opening and re-development of the former DLI museum and art gallery. She thanked staff for their hard work in bringing this together and advised that the views of key stakeholders had re-enforced the importance of this collection and the proud history of this regiment to the people of county Durham and beyond, which had also demonstrated a significant gap in the cultural offer. Option 3 which was considered to be the best value for money while delivery an excellent cultural and visual art venue.

Councillor Bell thanked the Corporate Director and cabinet member in bringing this report. He explained that the redevelopment of the site was integral to the broader opportunities of the redevelopment of the Aykley heads site. The study which was wide ranging and had been supported by independent advice and would complement the planned history centre development. He highlighted the financial impact of the redevelopment. He was delighted that they would be able to display more of the proud heritage and fill the cultural gap.

Councillor Wilkes applauded officers for working so hard on this, and how he was delighted to see that the DLI would be fully renovated and in a stunning environment to be proud of. He explained the importance of remembering the past and that it would be restored for future generations.

Councillor Sexton as armed forces champion advised that he was fully in support of this and thanked all for their hard work. He advised that by undertaking this work it would provide for a true tribute to the memory of those from the regiment.

Resolved:

Having regard to the corresponding exempt report, the recommendations in the report be approved.

5 Quarter Three, 2021/22 Performance Management Report

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which presented progress towards achieving the key outcomes of the council's corporate performance framework and highlighted key messages to inform strategic priorities and work programmes, in and to the end of quarter three, October to December 2021 (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Councillor Hopgood thanked the Corporate Director and his team for producing the report. She explained that the councils' performance and that of its partners continue to be impacted by the pandemic in many ways, and that the cost-of-living increases had been made worse by the terrible situation in Ukraine. Long term employment rates remained stable over the quarter, but below both regional and national averages. She advised that many households in county Durham continue to struggle with the increases in cost of living and Cabinet next month will receive an updated poverty action plan.

She advised that attracting inward investment is a priority for the council, that it was open for business, and gave an update on the developments, highlighting that these together with the bid for city of culture showed the councils ambition to create better jobs for those living in county Durham. She gave an update on a number of other areas including the high demand for social care services, increased request for assessments for education health and care plans, highway network improvements, and the re-introduction of performance appraisals for staff. She concluded by thanking all staff for their hard work and for going above and beyond in continuing to deliver the councils services.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

6 Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2021/22 - Period to 31 December 2021 and Update on Progress towards achieving MTFP(11) savings

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided updated information on:

- (a) the forecast revenue and capital outturn for 2021/22, based on the position to 31 December 2021;
- (b) the forecast for the council tax and business rates collection fund position at 31 March 2022, based on the position to 31 December 2021; and
- (c) the forecast use of and contributions to earmarked, cash limit and general reserves in 2021/22 and the estimated balances to be held at 31 March 2022.

The report sought approval of the revised capital programme, other budget adjustments and proposed sums treated as outside of the cash limit in year and provided Cabinet with an update on progress towards achieving MTFP(11) savings in 2021/22 (for copy of report see file of minutes). Councillor Bell thanked the Corporate Director and his team for the comprehensive update and remarked on the strong finance team that the council has.

He gave an update which included the covid funding position, service grouping financial forecasts, the review of the council's ear marked reserves, the position with the reserves, the collection funds, capital programme, and mtfp savings. He advised that as the council continues to manage the budgets prudently, with that there would maintain strong financial resilience.

Councillor Hopgood thanked the Corporate Director and his team, and all budget managers for effective management of their budgets. She gave updates on forecasting, ear marked reserves and the additional analysis of those. She advised that the cash limits and general reserves were prudent which reflected the scale and complexity of the council, and of the effects of the increased energy costs would have on council budgets.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

7 Bus Service Improvement Plan and Concessionary Fares Budget

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which sought agreement to provide short-term support to bus services by redirecting funding from the Concessionary Fares budget (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Councillor Scott's response to the question from Councillor Denali included providing information on the budget position, the work undertaken with bus operators and the community involvement in the programme.

Councillor Scott in moving the recommendations in the report advised of the problems that have affected bus services during the pandemic and of the strain this had on the sector, however by partnership work with the bus operators they were able to maintain a viable network. Bus services are a lifeline to many residents in county Durham and the proposals would support bus companies to keeping running services where there is currently little certainty of future funding.

Councillor Wilkes welcomed the proposal and in doing so urged government to ensure there was support for the comprehensive service that was needed in this county. He referenced the councils own bus service and how it operates. He welcomed the proposals in the report.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

8 Public Space Protection Order - Durham City

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhood Services which provided an overview of the powers, benefits and risks available under a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) and sought agreement to a consultation exercise being carried out on proposed new behaviours and actions to be included in the existing Public Space Protection Order to help control aggressive / anti-social type begging in Durham City (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Joy Allen, Police and Crime Commissioner for Durham addressed cabinet members having been invited to share her views on the consultation of the introduction of an order. She referenced the introduction of an order in another area of the police force area and explained how this had worked. She believed by adding this to the existing range of tools and powers would give the police and council officers the additional enforcement options to enable them to tackle aggressive and anti-social begging and help to reduce the fear of crime and make the city safer and stronger. She welcomed the consultation on the order.

Councillor Shuttleworth in moving the recommendations advised of the consultation that would take place to determine appetite for this and welcomed the views of the Police and Crime Commissioner. Councillors Scott and Wilkes also advised of their support for the consultation and looked forward to seeing the responses.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

9 Review of Community Engagement and Funding Processes

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which outlined a planned review of the community engagement and funding processes currently provided by Area Action Partnerships (AAPs) and set out the scope of the review, governance arrangement and proposed timescales for its completion (for copy of report see file of minutes).

The Leader advised that Councillor Surtees had submitted questions on the report however as she had not presented a written response would be provided to the member.

Councillor Scott in moving the recommendations in the report advised of the importance of the review, it would help ensure the councils community work going forward, and how to reach those not engaged in the current position.

She advised that it was timely for a review of its governance structures, and that work will focus on the future. Initial soundings from members had demonstrated that there is appetite for change as well as many positive forward-thinking ideas for a new approach. The AAP staff have also come forward with many positive ideas on how take this forward.

Councillor Sexton advised of his support for the review, its timely and will look forward. The scope will provide for creative thinking.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

10 Exclusion of the public

Resolved:

That under Section 100(a)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely discussion of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

11 Feasibility Study Outcomes: Refurbishment and Re-use of the Former DLI Museum and Art Gallery Building at Aykley Heads

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which outlined the outcomes of the further feasibility studies that have been undertaken following agreement by Cabinet in September 2021 to consider the options for refurbishment and reopening of the former DLI Museum and Art Gallery (DLIMAG) and grounds and set out an approach to bring it back into use as an exhibition centre, gallery and café venue with appropriate reflective and contemplative grounds (for copy of report see file of minutes).

The Leader advised that Councillor A Batey had submitted questions on the report however as she had not been present, a written response would be provided to the member.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.