



## RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The following is a record of the decisions taken at the meeting of **CABINET** held on **Wednesday 19 April 2023**. The decisions will come into force and may be implemented from **Tuesday 2 May 2023** unless the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or its Committees object to any such decision and call it in.

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### **Consultation on the Rights of Way Improvement Plan 4 (ROWIP4)**

#### **Summary**

The Cabinet considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change and the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which sought approval to begin a 12-week public consultation on the Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan 4 (ROWIP4).

The report explained the development of the consultation version of ROWIP4 and the intention of the 4 strategic objectives and 8 policies as drafted. All local highway authorities have a statutory duty, under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW), to produce a ROWIP. Public Rights Of Way (PROW) include footpaths, bridleways, and byways.

The ROWIP outlines how the local authority will address the extent to which rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public, ensuring the PROW network is fit for the 21st century. It does not replace the Council's existing statutory duties in respect of public rights of way but seeks to develop wider aspirations for public rights of way in County Durham.

The previous ROWIP, ROWIP3, ran from 2015 – 2018. ROWIP4 intends to be more strategic than the first three ROWIPs and the 4 strategic objectives and 8 policies are for the next 10 years, rather than 3 year lifespans. The Plan will put the authority in a strong position to draw in external funding and help set priorities for resources already allocated for PROW improvements. As part of drafting ROWIP4, there was extensive co-production across the different Council departments and with external organisations to develop a draft plan. Co-production has been fundamental to drafting the strategic objectives and policies that will frame PROW investment for the next 10 years.

The strategic objectives of ROWIP 4 are as follows:

- 1) Managing and enhancing the PROW Network so it is fit for the 21st century;
- 2) Promoting a PROW network that contributes to the Green Economy by marketing the County's high-quality environment;
- 3) Empowering communities and individuals to 'Move More';
- 4) Ensuring the County's PROW are accessible to people of all abilities.

The strategic objectives in ROWIP4 deliberately reflect key council plans and strategies. The objectives have also incorporated ideas from external organisations as diverse as the National Trust, County Durham Sport and the County Durham charity Walk and Talk Trust. Most external stakeholders highlighted a lack of confidence residents and visitors have when using PROW due to the lack of reliable infrastructure, such as the insufficient provision of signs, which creates fear around following routes that do not have clear directions. A summary of the intention of each of the eight policies consulted on was contained within the report. A 3-year delivery plan will be produced following the consultation and the consultation draft seeks to ensure that strategic objectives and policies are correct before finalising a detailed investment programme.

## **Decision**

The Cabinet:

- a) agreed the content of the report and the Rights of Way Improvement Plan 4 (2023-2033);
- b) agreed to a 12-week public consultation on the draft ROWIP4 as set out in Appendix 2;
- c) agreed that another report will be brought to Cabinet covering the consultation feedback and the adoption of the final ROWIP4.

## **Corporate Asset Management Plan 2023-2025**

### **Summary**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which presented the Corporate Asset Management Plan for 2023-2025, setting out how the property portfolio will support the Council's corporate priorities and objectives and providing the direction for the ongoing management of the portfolio over the next two years.

The size, shape and location of the Council's land and property portfolio is vitally important to enabling the success of the Council's ambitions. It provides space for the delivery of our public services; it helps create jobs, housing and economic growth as well as income to invest in services.

The strategic management of this valuable resource in the context of broader objectives for the economy and the environment is important to the Council and to the communities it serves.

In 2009, the unitary County Council was formed from 8 authorities and information about the now combined estate brought together from each former district council and the County Council varied greatly in its availability and quality. The Council owns over nine thousand hectares of land and has an interest in nearly nine hundred buildings. The operational estate is valued at £1 billion and costs £34 million annually to run. The estate is widely dispersed across the county and in addition to the property held for service delivery, there is a significant legacy of sites used for reclamation, heavy industry and amenity sites. The historic and inherited nature of many of the assets bring specific challenges and responsibilities.

A significant programme of activities is underway within the Council to implement the Corporate Property Partnership (CPP) approach to asset management. This approach ensures that the property portfolio is managed and maintained consistently and corporately, allowing services to concentrate on their operational delivery. A major component of the CPP model is the development a Corporate Asset Management Plan (CAMP) which sets out at a high level how the property portfolio will support the achievement of the corporate priorities and objectives and will provide direction for the ongoing management of the portfolio.

This CAMP is designed to provide this context and direction of travel for the near term. It has three elements:

- The Asset Management Strategy – highlighting the strategic context, factors that will influence change, and translating organisational objectives into property objectives;
- The Asset Management Policy – setting out the framework of rules, culture and behaviour that will ensure the consistent management and high performance of our property assets;
- The Asset Management Action Plan – an action plan of activities and projects that deliver our property objectives.

Progress on delivering the activities in the Action Plan will be fundamental in the further development of the CAMP and, in particular, the delivery of the second iteration of the document in 2025. Wider consultation with external agencies, partner organisations and communities will also inform the CAMP post-2025.

Amongst the many agendas supported by good use of assets are the Inclusive Economic Strategy, the County Plan, the Climate Strategy and the Council's Corporate Plan, the CAMP therefore has due regard to the role of land and property in supporting these adopted plans.

## **Decision**

The Cabinet:

- (a) approved the Corporate Asset Management Plan 2023-2025;
- (b) agreed to the continued development of a second stage CAMP to be presented to Cabinet in 2025.

Helen Lynch  
Head of Legal & Democratic Services  
21 April 2023