

**2 December 2020**



## **Report from the Cabinet**

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### **Purpose of the Report**

To provide information to the Council on issues considered by the Cabinet at meetings held on 14 October and 18 November 2020 to enable Members to ask related questions.

### **Contents**

#### **14 October 2020**

- Item 1 Medium Term Financial Plan(11) 2021/22 – 2024/25  
[Key Decision: CORP/R/20/02]
- Item 2 County Plan Adoption [Key Decision: REG/04/20]
- Item 3 Council housing delivery – Durham County Council development potential
- Item 4 Towns and Villages Strategy
- Item 5 Durham Children Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report 2019-20
- Item 6 Annual Report 2019/20 County Durham Safeguarding Adults Board
- Item 7 Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report 2019-20
- Item 8 Witton Gilbert Allotments

#### **18 November 2020**

- Item 9 Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2021/22 and Council Tax: COVID-19 Hardship Fund Payments [Key Decision: CORP/R/20/05]
- Item 10 Council Tax Base 2021/22 and Forecast Deficit on the Council Tax Collection Fund as at 31 March 2021 [Key Decision: CORP/R/20/03]

- Item 11 Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2021/21 – Period to 30 September 2020 and Update on progress on achieving MTFP(10) Savings
- Item 12 Mid-Year Review Report on Treasury Management for the period to 30 September 2020
- Item 13 Mainstream Primary and Secondary Formula Funding 2021-22
- Item 14 Regional Adoption Agency – Full Business Case
- Item 15 Overview and Scrutiny Review of GP Services in County Durham
- Item 16 Director of Public Health Annual Report 2020

**1. Medium Term Financial Plan(11) 2021/22 – 2024/25**  
**[Key Decision: CORP/R/20/02]**  
**Cabinet Portfolio Holders – Councillor Alan Napier and**  
**Councillor Simon Henig**  
**Contacts - Jeff Garfoot 03000 261 946 and Jenny Haworth**  
**03000 263 603**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided an update on the development of the 2021/22 budget and the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP(11)).

There continued to be significant uncertainty in terms of the financial settlement for local government and how the available funding would be shared between local authorities through the funding formula. The government was previously expected to publish a Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) in summer 2019 covering a three-year period. The CSR is now expected to be published in November 2020. Government are already indicating that there will be tough choices in relation to investment in public services, particularly considering the huge budget deficit forecast the country faces as a result of COVID-19. There is also the added complication of the UK exit from the European Union and the impact this may have on public finances also.

It was also expected that the outcome of the Fair Funding Review (FFR), including the move to 75% Business Rate Retention, would be implemented in 2021/22. In line with the delay in the CSR it is now expected that the outcome of the FFR will not be implemented until 2022/23 at the earliest. This adds further uncertainty and complexity to medium term financial planning. The lack of clarity in relation to the CSR and FFR is exacerbated by uncertainties in relation to future council tax referendum levels, future funding of the Improved Better Care Fund, delays in the publication of the Social Care Green Paper, short term funding provided to local authorities in 2020/21 for adult and children social care pressures and funding for the High Needs Dedicated Schools Grant. This level of uncertainty is making financial planning extremely difficult and requires the council to be flexible and adaptable as it considers setting the 2021/22 budget and the medium term financial plan. Financial planning within the council will ensure that the council is well placed to react effectively to any outcome, however planning with this level of uncertainty is not conducive to effective long term decision making.

Planning at this stage is on the basis that the council will lose a further £15 million of government funding over a five year transition period as a result of the outcome of the CSR and the FFR implementation in 2022/23. This position primarily reflects ongoing concerns regarding the expected utilisation of the Advisory Council for Resource Allocation (ACRA) methodology for apportioning Public Health Grant which would result in a loss of £18 million of funding. It has

been assumed that the £17.6 million of one off funding received in 2020/21 for Adult and Children's social care pressures will continue on a recurrent basis.

At this stage it has been assumed that there are no net long term financial impacts from COVID-19 other than a short term depression in tax base increases. This applies to both increased cost pressures and loss of income. As the budget is refined, consideration will need to be given to the risk of reduced income and the extent to which this may be covered through the government's Income Guarantee Scheme going forward and the extent of COVID-19 expenditure pressures and future government support that may be available. This position will be kept under review and assumptions will be amended if it becomes apparent that there will be a financial impact in 2021/22 and across the MTFP.

In line with previous practice the MTFP financial forecasts have been reviewed. Additional savings of £42.7 million are currently forecast to balance the budget over the 2021/22 to 2024/25 period. Savings are forecast to be required in all years of MTFP(11) as budget pressures and the impact of funding reductions outstrip the council's ability to generate additional income from business rates and council tax.

The achievement of an additional £42.7 million of savings over the next four years will undoubtedly be extremely challenging – more so given the level of savings already made. The emphasis since 2011/12 has been to minimise savings from front line services by protecting them wherever possible whilst maximising savings in management and support functions and by generating additional income. The opportunity for further savings in these areas is becoming much more difficult following ten years of austerity and the delivery of £244 million of savings up to 31 March 2021.

The total savings required at this stage for 2021/22 to balance the budget amount to £12.8 million. A sum of £3.3 million of the savings already agreed in MTFP(10) are available in 2021/22.

This leaves a savings shortfall at this stage of £9.5 million to balance the budget next year. Additional savings plans are being developed to enable the council to be able to react to the outcome of the 2021/22 local government finance settlement which is expected to be announced in December 2020, although this will very much be influenced by the publication date of the CSR. If required, the council is able to utilise the Budget Support Reserve (BSR) to assist in balancing the budget in 2021/22. The current balance on the BSR, as reported to Council on 26 February 2020 is £16.4 million.

To enable the council to be able to set a balanced budget for 2021/22, a range of options will need to be considered including additional savings and utilisation of the BSR. The level of savings shortfall will be influenced by the local

government settlement and the ongoing impact of budget pressures resulting for COVID-19.

## **Decision**

We noted:

- a) the assumptions made in relation to COVID-19 at this stage of preparing MTFP 11 and that these assumptions will be reviewed as the MTFP is refined and when further information is received in relation to the council's financial settlement;
- b) the requirement to for savings of £49.0 million for the period 2021/22 to 2024/25;
- c) the £6.337 million of savings for the period 2021/22 to 2024/25 were previously agreed in MTFP(9) and (10);
- d) a forecasted £42.7 million savings shortfall across MTFP(11) although this forecast could change significantly based upon outcomes of the Comprehensive Spending Review, the Fair Funding Review and after addressing future base budget pressures being faced by the council especially resulting from COVID-19; and
- e) additional savings of £9.5 million are forecast to be required to balance the 2021/22 budget at this stage.

We agreed:

- i. the high level MTFP(11) timetable as set out in the report;
- ii. the approach outlined for consultation; and
- iii. the proposals to build equalities considerations into decision making.

## **2. County Plan Adoption [Key Decision: REG/04/20] Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Carl Marshall Contacts – Mike Allum 03000 261 906**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Economic Growth which sought approval to recommend that Council agree the adoption of the County Durham Plan.

The County Durham Plan seeks to ensure that County Durham is a successful place to live, work, invest and visit by focussing on supporting and creating vibrant communities. The Plan has been through a number of stages of consultation and was subsequently submitted for examination on 28 June 2019. A Planning Inspector was then appointed by the Secretary of State to examine the Plan. Public hearings took place between 22 October and 5 December 2019 with one additional hearing to discuss housing matters on 6 February 2020.

On 20 February 2020 the Inspector wrote to the Council to state that following the hearings he had concluded that the plan was likely to be capable of being found sound subject to a number of Main Modifications being made. A public consultation on all of the proposed modifications took place between 26 May 2020 and the 21 July 2020 with additional measures in place to ensure the consultation could proceed during the Covid19 pandemic. 503 comments were received on the modifications from 102 respondents including one petition relating to the Barnard Castle relief road.

Following consideration of the full responses to this consultation the Inspector published his final report on the local plan examination on 21 September 2020. The Inspector concluded that the County Durham Plan was sound subject to Main Modifications being made to the Plan prior to adoption.

The Cabinet were reminded that the Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimization and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Equality Act 2010; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken to inform the Plan as it progressed. The Equality Impact Assessment was reviewed and updated throughout the Plan process. No negative impacts on equality are identified in the Equality Impact Assessment which indicates that the Plan is likely to have a positive impact across all of the protected groups.

Relevant stakeholders have been consulted and where possible, their comments used to shape the Plan and ensure that the council meets its Public Sector Equality Duty. The Plan has been developed, consulted on and independently examined in accordance with relevant legislation and having had due regard to all relevant factors, it is not considered that any issues have been identified which would prevent the adoption of the Plan from an Equalities perspective.

This report recommended that the Council, as local planning authority, adopts the County Durham Plan incorporating all modifications. On adoption of the Plan, it will replace all saved policies from the former district local plans and a number from the minerals and waste local plans. As soon as reasonably practical following adoption of the Plan, regulations require the Council to make available the County Durham Plan, an Adoption Statement, the Sustainability Report, the Sustainability Appraisal Post Adoption Statement and Habitats Regulations Assessment Adoption Note.

On 16 July 2020 the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 changed the requirements

relating to making copies of the development plan documents available for inspection at Council buildings as set out in Regulation 35 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

Councils can now comply with Regulation 35 by making development plan documents available on their website. This change applies from 16 July 2020 until 31 December 2020. Following adoption of the Plan, a person aggrieved by the Plan, may under Section 113 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, make an application to the High Court to challenge it. Such an application must be made within six weeks of adoption.

## **Decision**

We made the following recommendations that Council:

- a. considers the content of the Inspector's Final Report into the Examination of the County Durham Plan;
- b. adopts the County Durham Plan 2016-2035, incorporating the Main Modifications as set out in the Inspector's Final Report and other Additional Modifications. In doing so, this will replace the saved policies from the former district local plans and a number of policies from the existing Minerals and Waste Local Plans;
- c. subject to recommendation (b), that the Council approves the updated Policies Map, incorporating the Main Modifications as set out in the Inspector's Final Report;
- d. authorises the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration to make any necessary minor textual, presentational or layout amendments to the County Durham Plan 2016-2035;
- e. notes the content of the Adoption Statement prepared in accordance with Regulation 26 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Post Adoption Statement (PAS), prepared in accordance with Regulation 16 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

### **3. Council housing delivery – Durham County Council development potential Cabinet Portfolio Holders – Councillor Kevin Shaw Contact – Laura Martin 03000 261 260**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which provided the information requested at our meeting held on 18 March 2020 meeting detailing the business case to begin building council

housing and to seek approval to begin a programme of council house building from 2021 – 2025.

On 18 March 2020 we considered a report on the potential for the Council to build homes for rent. The report outlined the strategic case for council house building and identified a number of issues that required further work before an informed decision could be made. We noted the strategic argument for the Authority to intervene within the housing market by directly building and owning Council houses; and, agreed to the development of a business plan and associated strategy which will be the basis of a future report.

The report outlined the 'business case' for the Council becoming actively involved in the direct delivery of affordable homes in order to assist the market in meeting housing need in the County.

There is a strategic case for the Council to become actively involved in delivering affordable homes across the County. The County Durham Housing Strategy 2019 to 2024 has two key objectives that support this initiative. Firstly, the strategy seeks to maximise the delivery of affordable homes in the County and secondly there is a commitment to deliver homes to meet the needs of older people and support people to live independently for as long as possible. The proposal in this report is central to the Housing Strategy and represents a direct contribution to achieving both objectives in areas of housing need across the County. At this time, a new building programme would also support the ongoing economic and community recovery from the Covid 19 pandemic.

There is an annual requirement to deliver 836 affordable homes and actual delivery falls well short of this requirement. The Housing Strategy seeks to increase the delivery of affordable homes to meet the identified gap and additional new homes for rent can form an important part of the strategy. Three options were considered:

- (a) do nothing;
- (b) provide direct capital grant to partner Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to increase affordable housing supply;
- (c) provide capital grant to support a Durham County Council new build programme.

Although options (b) and (c) delivered additional new affordable homes for rent, the latter option resulted in a significant asset being owned by the County Council as a result of its investment, rather than the Council's investment resulting in a partner RSL increasing the value of its asset base. In view of this option (c) was recommended to Cabinet.

New Council building will help meet a proportion of the annual shortfall in supply of affordable homes. At this stage a focus on bungalow accommodation with a mix of general needs housing would be a focus for any new programme.

In addition to this proposal, officers are working on other delivery models to help bridge the gap between affordable homes required and those being delivered. Such interventions could include direct purchase of existing homes and working with house builders to include council housing on a larger scale. The financial modelling that has been undertaken shows that in order to implement a sustainable house building programme significant capital subsidy is required as the affordable rent income would not support the development and build costs together with the ongoing revenue implications. The capital subsidy would come from Homes England Grant, S106 funds, local authority land appropriation and a direct capital subsidy per property from the Council's capital programme.

On 10 September, Homes England published details of its Affordable Homes Programme 2021 to 2026. Nationally, £7.39 billion has been made available to provide grants to deliver up to 130,000 affordable homes over the five year period. Appropriate applications will be made to Homes England to benefit from this programme.

The scale of any development programme has also been considered within the financial modelling. A 500 homes programme would result in a total capital spend of approximately £70 million which would help support the local construction industry and associated supply chain during the extended Covid 19 recovery period. It is envisaged that emerging work with Procurement on a Durham Local Wealth Building programme will ensure that local communities and businesses have the opportunity to benefit. The programme would require direct capital subsidy of approximately £25,000 per property (£12.5 million in total) to be met from the Council's capital programme. The modelling is based upon Durham County Council land being appropriated and this will impact upon the current asset disposal programme resulting in approximately £3.16 million being forgone in capital receipts.

The Council has already budgeted for £1 million over the next two financial years and this will be able to support the various costs associated with delivering the build programme. The modelling has been based on 'affordable rents' being charged. These are rents at a level up to 80% of the market rents and would be similar to those charged by the Registered Providers (RPs) operating in Durham.

Any development supported by Homes England Grant would be supported by a 'Framework Delivery Agreement' which would specify that the properties can be let at affordable rents.

Council capacity to deliver a new build programme and ongoing housing management and maintenance is limited. The report therefore suggests that a mix of internal and external capacity is procured to develop and deliver the programme and that housing management and maintenance services are

provided by a partner Registered Provider until such time as the scale of council home ownership and income supports consideration of an in house service. The Council closed its Housing Revenue Account in 2015 when it transferred its housing stock to Believe.

As part of the closure of the account Government agreed to write off the debt on the account amounting to £130 million. It is a legal requirement to have a Housing Revenue Account once the Council owns 200 homes. Currently the council owns 17 residential properties which are held in the general fund.

It is a requirement of s76(3) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 that a budget is set that does not result in a deficit. As such the capital subsidies identified in the report are needed to ensure that is the case. In addition, the Council will need to seek the Secretary of State's confirmation that the Government will not seek to reinstate the £130 million debt that was written off at the time of stock transfer. Such confirmation has been provided in recent years to councils that have started a house building programme.

New homes for rent will be let under Secure Tenancies. As a consequence, they will be subject to the Right to Buy (RTB) with tenant discounts in line with legislation. The RTB scheme has a cost floor rule that reduces the tenant discount to zero in the event that the cost floor (ie the cost of building the property) is higher than the RTB value with discount. These cost floor provisions apply for 15 years in the case of new homes being built by the Council. As such the cost floor rules will effectively prevent purchases with any discount for 15 years and after that period RTB purchases with discounts would apply.

## **Decision**

We:

- (a) agreed to begin a Council house building programme of up to 500 homes over the period 2021 – 2026, with annual programme reviews;
- (b) provided additional capital funding of £12.5 million from the Council's Capital Programme over the same period.
- (c) agreed the use of £1 million allocated in the 2020/21 and 2021/22 General Fund budget to provide the capacity and expertise to develop and deliver the house building programme;
- (d) agreed the principle of appropriating Council land at nil cost to facilitate the new build programme;
- (e) agreed the principle of setting rents at affordable levels subject to a more detailed report on rent setting strategy;
- (f) noted that the successful delivery of the programme will require the Council to re-establish a Housing Revenue Account and to seek

confirmation from the Secretary of State that the previous write off of HRA debt will not be resurrected;

- (g) agreed to receive a further report on the proposed build programme for 2021/22 and the indicative programme for 2022 – 2026.

#### **4. Towns and Villages Strategy** **Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Carl Marshall** **Contacts - Graham Wood 03000 262 002 and** **Michelle Robinson 03000 261 917**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which sought approval for the refocused approach to the regeneration of towns and villages across the county.

On 12 December 2018, we agreed an initial report that sought to address the issues that had been identified by local communities as most important to them. The issues ranged from the need to support local retail to problems with vacant buildings and land, the condition of the environment and the impact of private landlords and empty properties, with a range of pilot activity commenced to address some of these immediate priorities. The report acknowledged that the Towns and Villages programme should be aligned to existing regeneration activity, assist in accelerating the delivery of projects and tackle issues which were prioritised by communities.

The County Durham Towns and Villages Strategy provides the opportunity to enable the accelerated delivery of council strategies and priorities through a greater understanding of both the needs and opportunities that exist within communities. This will be evidence led using a consistent people based evidence base; to align both Council and partner activity in what is planned; to realign activity to ensure that it meets the specific needs of the communities and then use allocated funding to strengthen and maximise the outcomes particularly related to community resilience and increasing confidence in the most disadvantaged areas.

Since the original Towns and Villages report, the Covid 19 pandemic had become one of the most profound challenges society had faced in more than a generation. During the pandemic, the Council has worked with national, regional and local partners to protect our communities and plan for recovery.

In particular, the need to develop and strengthen community capacity and resilience going forward is a clear priority in ensuring a strong economic and healthy future.

In order to ensure that the delivery of the council's priorities and themes are also directed to the regeneration areas where the biggest impacts are possible, an evidence base has been developed using Middle Super Output Areas.

There are 66 MSOA geographies across County Durham and this provides the best understanding of issues within a community. It is important that there is a sense check of the issues identified reflecting that whilst the boundaries are largely in alignment there are some minor discrepancies when compared against the 63 electoral wards. Whilst MSOAs are used to collate evidence to inform consultation, the information gathered will be reflected as places that communities recognise.

The Towns and Villages Strategy would overlay current activity and projects with a view to improving benefits to our communities by aligning current investment and initiatives to ensure that local priorities are enhanced with funding directed to the most disadvantaged areas.

Significant consultation has already taken place with communities and Area Action Partnerships (AAPs) which include local members, members of the voluntary and community sector, business and the public. This early engagement has helped to shape many of the council's strategies including the Vision, the County Durham Plan and the Housing Strategy. This coupled with a consistent evidence base means that the Towns and Villages Strategy, reflects a detailed understanding of the needs and opportunities of our communities. This engagement will continue as part of the further development of the Towns and Villages investment proposals and will be reflected in further updates to cabinet early in 2021.

## **Decision**

We agreed the County Durham Towns and Villages Strategy and will receive a further report, detailing the Towns and Villages Investment Plan following discussions with the Area Action Partnerships.

We also endorsed the evidence-based approach to prioritising projects for regeneration and supported the on-going discussions with Area Action Partnerships in developing a programme of activity going forward.

We delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth and the Corporate Director of Resources, in consultation with the portfolio holders for Economic Regeneration and Deputy Leader and Finance, to approve any changes to the pilot programme as identified for this financial year.

## **5. Durham Children Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report 2019-20 Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Olwyn Gunn Contact - Stephen Winship**

We considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services and Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which presented the Durham Children's Safeguarding Partnership

(DCSP) Annual Report for 2019-20. The report described the local governance arrangements and structure of the DSCP and provided information on the safeguarding arrangements that were introduced in 2018/19 through the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

### **Decision**

We endorsed the Durham Children Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report for 2019-20.

**6. Annual Report 2019/20 County Durham Safeguarding Adults Board  
Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Lucy Hovvels  
Contact – Gordon Elliott 03000 263 695**

We considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services and Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which presented the Annual Report of the County Durham Local Safeguarding Adults Board 2019/2020. The report provided assurance on safeguarding adults across County Durham and outlined progress against the strategic priorities, the peer review recommendations about the voices of adults and practitioners, and, the early response to the Covid 19 emergency.

In the light of Covid 19 the statutory partners have been meeting to discuss and formulate a Covid 19 Recovery Plan. The recovery plan was finalised prior to publication and was included within the Annual Report.

### **Decision**

We endorsed the County Durham Safeguarding Adults Board report for 2018-19.

**7. Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report 2019-20  
Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Olwyn Gunn and  
Councillor Ivan Jewell, Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel  
Contact – Helen Fergusson 03000 266 543**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services which presented the Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report for 2019-20. Following the 2016 Ofsted inspection, a number of changes were implemented to strengthen political and management oversight and increase the voice of children and young people. The September 2019 Children's Services Ofsted inspection report stated the Corporate Parenting Panel is effective and is maintaining good political and strategic governance of children in care and care leavers. To ensure the voice of the child is reflected in

the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel, it was agreed that young people from the Children in Care Council, supported by officers from the Partnerships Team, would develop the Corporate Parenting Panel's Annual Report.

## **Decision**

We endorsed the Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report for 2019-20.

### **8. Witton Gilbert Allotments Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Kevin Shaw Contacts - Susan Robinson 03000 267 332 and Helen Lynch 03000 269 732**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which sought authority from Cabinet to make a Compulsory Purchase Order pursuant to section 25 and section 39 of the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 in respect of the land at Witton Gilbert allotments ("the Order"). The report also sought authority to take all ancillary steps necessary in order to secure the confirmation of the Order and purchase of the Land.

Witton Gilbert Parish Council (WGPC) currently rents the land at Witton Gilbert. The Parish Council sub-let the land to local residents for use as allotments. The freehold owner placed the Land on the market. The Parish Council made an unsuccessful bid to purchase the land, the land eventually being sold to a third party on 7 May 2019. On 29 July 2019, solicitors acting for the new freehold owners served a notice to quit the Land on WGPC.

Section 25 of the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 empowers local councils to compulsorily acquire land for the purposes of providing allotments. Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) powers are given to both parish and county councils. However, where a parish council seeks to exercise such powers, it must do so via a request to the county council, who may exercise the CPO powers on behalf of the parish council.

If the county council is agreeable to exercising its CPO powers on behalf of the parish council, the county council shall make the CPO on the basis that the land is to be transferred to the parish council in the event the order is confirmed and the parish council must meet all of the expenses incurred by the county council in making the order.

WGPC has formally requested the County Council's assistance in making a CPO in respect of the Land. WGPC submitted a comprehensive justification as to why the County Council should make the Order. On 27 May 2020, the Council's Interim Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy & Growth resolved to use delegated powers to formally corporately acknowledge support

for WGPC's request for the County Council to exercise its CPO powers on behalf of WGPC subject to detailed legal and other procedural matters being satisfactorily determined including a formal resolution to make a CPO being made appropriately. Subsequently, both the County Council and WGPC have attempted to negotiate with the Freehold Owners. All attempts at negotiation in order to voluntarily acquire the Land have been unsuccessful however, attempts to negotiate remain ongoing. The County Council is satisfied that there is a need for allotments in the vicinity of the land and that there are no suitable alternative sites which would be available. WGPC has also entered into a legal agreement to pay the County Council's fees.

## **Decision**

We agreed to resolve that the use of Compulsory Purchase powers under section 25 and section 39 of the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 and powers in relation to new rights under Section 13 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 are justified in order to facilitate the provision of allotments on the Land outlined in the CPO Plan.

We approved the draft County Council of Durham (Witton Gilbert) Compulsory Purchase Order 2020, the map comprising the Land and the draft Statement of Reasons made in support of the Order (*'the Statement of Reasons'*).

We authorised:

the making of the County Council of Durham (Witton Gilbert) Compulsory Purchase Order 2020 under section 25 of the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908;

We authorised the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to:

- i. make such changes to the draft Order, the Map (within the red line boundary as shown on the Map) and Statements of Reasons as considered necessary;
- ii. to take all necessary steps to secure confirmation of the Order and the acquisition of all third party interests in the Land and any new rights and the removal of all occupants from the Land. This authorisation includes the publication and advertisement of the Order, serving appropriate notices, seeking confirmation of the Order, taking all steps to acquire relevant interests and such other steps as deemed appropriate by the Head of Legal and Democratic to facilitate the provision of allotments on the Land;
- iii. to serve all appropriate notices of confirmation of the Order and to make one or more general vesting declarations or serve notices to treat and

notices of entry (as appropriate) in respect of the Land, following confirmation of the Order; and

- iv. to initiate or take part in any arbitration or proceedings before the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber) or the Courts in order to resolve any disputes as to compensation or other payments payable for any interests in the Land or arising from the making or confirmation of the Order or securing possession of any part of the Land or title to any part of the Land or the removal of any occupants or apparatus of statutory undertakers or communication code operators.

**9. Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2021/22 and Council Tax: COVID-19 Hardship Fund Payments [Key Decision: CORP/R/20/05]  
Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Alan Napier  
Contacts - Paul Darby 03000 261 930 and Mary Readman 03000 268 161**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which sought approval to recommend to Council the continuation of the current Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) for a further year into 2021/22. This would continue the protection afforded to all claimants in line with what their entitlement would have been under the former Council Tax Benefit system. The report also provided information on the current and forecasted expenditure in terms of the Government's COVID-19 hardship fund, sought approval for the allocation of the remaining COVID-19 hardship fund grant to continue to support vulnerable residents, and also sought approval of the updated Discretionary Council Tax Reduction (COVID-19) policy in line with agreement on the allocation of the remaining COVID-19 hardship grant fund.

Durham is one of a small minority of councils to continue to offer the same level of support to all claimants as was available under the former Council Tax Benefit scheme. There are currently 58,250 LCTRS claimants in County Durham, of which 22,050 (38%) are pensioners and 36,200 (62%) are working age. 28,940 (80%) of working age claimants currently receive 100% LCTRS discount, with LCTRS support forecast to be circa £61.9m in 2020/21.

The rollout of Universal Credit (UC) is scheduled to be completed in 2024 and is already in payment to a significant number of people in Durham. As of September 2020, there were circa 18,250 LCTR claimants receiving UC, just over 50% of the working age LCTR caseload. The council is around four times more likely to receive a report of a change in circumstances when a working age LCTR claim is based on UC, than when it is not.

Regular monthly recalculations of UC and LCTR, most frequently caused by changes in earnings, are leading to multiple bills being issued to households.

This has resulted in residents not being able to easily keep track of their Council Tax liability, leading to difficulties for households when managing their finances and personal budgeting.

The Council will need to keep track of the impact of the continuing roll out of UC. After many years of continued improvement, the in-year council tax collection rate reduced slightly in 2018/19 to 96.65%, and further still in 2019/20 to 96.37%. The current year has seen a further significant reduction year on year also but that in most part is due to the impact of COVID-19.

Consideration of whether to extend the current scheme into 2021/22 takes account of a number of key factors and changing the scheme at this stage means additional council tax revenues (or pressures) would need to be built into the medium term financial plan (MTFP) projections. No changes to the scheme were factored into the MTFP(11) projections reported to Cabinet on 14 October 2020.

The coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on the LCTRS working age caseload, which increased dramatically in the first quarter of 2020/21 as an unprecedented number of new claims were received by working age customers adversely affected by COVID-19. At the peak in May 2020 the working age LCTRS caseload was almost 3,000 higher than in January. The total value of LCTRS awards is expected to be around £5m higher in 2020/21 than in the previous year.

In March 2020 the Government announced a £500m hardship fund, of which Durham was allocated £6,964,443, to provide support to economically vulnerable people and households during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Government announced that it was their 'strong expectation' that the funding would be used to give all working age LCTRS recipients a further reduction in their 2020/21 council tax bill of £150, or a reduction of their liability to nil if their liability was already below £150 after LCTR.

On 4 May 2020, under a delegated decision taken by the Corporate Director of Resources, the Council adopted a policy which provided an enhanced scheme, offering a reduction of up to £300. This was affordable in Durham as the LCTRS does not have a minimum payment level, and as a result 80% of residents were already receiving LCTR and have no council tax to pay. To ensure that the COVID-19 hardship funding was used to support the most vulnerable in the county, £1m of the grant received was set aside to supplement the council's Welfare Assistance Scheme in the coming year, aimed at anti-poverty and community resilience measures, leaving £5,964,443 of grant to provide additional support to residents through LCTR hardship top ups.

It is estimated that by the end of 2020/21, as a result of administering payments to support the reduction of council tax bills by up to £300 for working age residents receiving LCTR, the Council will have applied around £4.2m of the COVID-19 hardship funding, leaving approximately £1.8m of grant unspent.

One option for using the remaining COVID-19 hardship funding is to continue to offer some additional support to working age LCTRS recipients in 2021/22. The estimated cost of this would be £2.4m should we make a payment of up to £150, £1.7m for payments up to £100 and £900,000 for payments up to £50.

When accounting for expenditure of the COVID-19 hardship funding there is no absolute requirement to spend all or even most of the money on help with council tax. Unspent hardship funding could be spent in other ways which supports economically vulnerable residents.

Support for foodbanks, advice services, or local welfare schemes are all examples of potential funding beneficiaries. Local authorities could even use the funding to help cover the increased cost of the scheme due to COVID-19. This report recommends that the remainder of the Covid-19 hardship fund is retained and carried over to 2021/22 and that the council continues to make LCTRS hardship top up payments to LCTRS claimants in 2021/22 at a rate of up to £100. In doing so the Council would be ensuring that the grant allocation is fully expended for the purposes for which it was intended and would be tapering off support to financially vulnerable households, who have received up to an additional £300 of support this year.

## **Decision**

We resolved to recommend to Council that the current Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme is continued into 2021/22, which will retain the same level of support to all working age council taxpayers on low incomes as was the case under the previous Council Tax Benefit Scheme and agreed;

- (d) that the extension to the Scheme be initially for a further year only and be kept under continuous review with a further decision on the scheme to apply in 2022/23 to be considered by Cabinet in summer 2021 and Full Council by 11 March 2022;
- (e) to ensure full use of the COVID-19 Hardship Fund allocation to support vulnerable residents experiencing financial difficulty by extending the existing top up arrangements into 2021/22, making a maximum payment of £100 to eligible residents in receipt of Council Tax Reduction next year; and

- (f) the Discretionary Council Tax Hardship Reduction (COVID–19) Policy which had been updated to incorporate the extension of the scheme into 2021/22 as outlined in the report.

**10. Council Tax Base 2021/22 and Forecast Deficit on the Council Tax Collection Fund as at 31 March 2021 [Key Decision: CORP/R/20/03]  
Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Alan Napier  
Contacts - Paul Darby 03000 261 930**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which determined the council's tax base for domestic properties liable to pay council tax, which is an important component in the council's budget setting process for 2021/22 and to report on the estimated collection fund surplus as at 31 March 2021.

Regulations made under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires each billing authority to calculate its 'council tax base' for the following financial year. The council tax base is a measure of the county council's 'taxable capacity', for the purpose of setting its council tax. Legislation requires the council to set out the formula for that calculation and that the tax base is formally approved by Cabinet.

In determining the council tax base for 2021/22 the following issues are factored into the calculation:

- (a) The impact of exemptions and discounts being applied to properties within County Durham;
- (b) Forecast impact on the tax base as a result of changes in the incidence of Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) claims, which is a discount rather than a benefit payment and therefore reduces the tax base;
- (c) Forecast impact on the tax base as a result of the changes made to the Long Term Empty (LTE) property council tax premium, offset by estimated impact of the new section 13A(1)(c) policy;
- (d) Forecast impact on the tax base as a result of growth (i.e. new build) or reductions (e.g. demolitions or increases in the incidence of other council tax discounts and exemptions) for 2021/22; and
- (e) Provision for non-collection of council tax due to bad debts that need to be written off.

COVID-19 was making it more difficult to accurately forecast a tax base for next year. The pandemic has significantly impacted on the local economy leading to increased unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, and a subsequent increase in the incidence of LCTRS claims.

The council experienced a 4% increase in claims for LCTRS in quarter one, followed by a steady reduction in the number of claims across quarter two as the national lockdown came to an end.

New LCTRS claims received in August and September were in line with “normal” levels, though the underlying position is that there are many more LCTRS claims in payment currently than were anticipated when the tax base was set last year. There are concerns that there will be a further wave of new LCTRS claims in quarter three when the furlough scheme comes to an end and as lockdown restrictions potentially impact on employment.

New house building has continued throughout the pandemic period, though not quite at the rate that would have been expected previously, however, there was still a steady stream of new assessments being added to the rating list, expected to continue into 2021/22.

Taking all these matters into account the council tax base for the financial year 2021/22, based on the current position and prudent assumptions around the incidence of discounts and exemptions across the coming eighteen months plus prospects for new builds, has been calculated to be 141,623.2 band D equivalent properties, a small decrease of 118.8 (0.08%) on the council tax base for 2020/21.

This is the first time since the LCTRS was introduced that the tax base for the following year has been lower than the current year and this will reduce the council’s tax raising capacity, resulting in a MTFP / budget pressure next year of circa £0.2 million. Prior to the pandemic impacts it would have been expected that there would be an increase in tax raising capacity of between £1 million and £1.5 million from increases in the council tax base.

As at 30 September 2020 the council tax collection fund is forecast to have a deficit of £4.816 million at 31 March 2021. Durham County Council’s share of this deficit would be £4.034 million.

The council would usually declare its council tax collection fund position for budget setting purposes based on the quarter two forecast and inform the two principal precepting bodies to the Collection Fund - County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority and Durham Police, Crime and Victims’ Commissioner – of the amounts they would need to take into account next year.

Regulations have changed for 2021/22 and whilst previously the shares of the declared Collection Fund Surplus or Deficit would need to be absorbed by the relevant bodies in the following year, the Government have amended the regulations to allow this pressure to be spread over three years. Given the uncertain and fluid position currently and that COVID-19 can still have a significant impact on the council tax collection fund outturn it is felt that it is too

early to declare the collection fund position for budget setting purposes. The council plans on declaring the final position later in the year.

The statutory deadline for declaring the forecast position is 15 January. The quarter two position has been shared with the two principal precepting bodies to the Collection Fund.

## **Decision**

We approved the council tax base for the financial year 2021/22 for the county, which has been calculated to be 141,623.2 band D equivalent properties. We have noted the impact on individual Town and Parish council tax bases and the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme grant allocations for the financial year 2021/22 and the forecasted council tax Collection Fund position at 31 March 2021.

We agreed that the final position for budget setting purposes will be declared later in the year.

### **11. Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2021/21 – Period to 30 September 2020 and Update on progress on achieving MTFP(10) Savings Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Alan Napier Contacts - Jeff Garfoot Tel: 03000 261 946 and Paul Darby Tel: 03000 261930**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which included information on the updated forecast revenue and capital outturn for 2020/21; the updated forecast for the council tax and business rates collection fund position at 31 March 2021, and, the updated forecast use of earmarked, cash limit and general reserves and estimated balances to be held at 31 March 2021.

The report also sought approval of the budget adjustments and proposed sums outside of the cash limit, and, provide Cabinet with an update on progress towards achieving MTFP(10) savings.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the council, partners and local communities had worked tirelessly responding to the pandemic putting steps in place for recovery. The financial implications of COVID-19 are significant and complex which made forecasting the council's outturn position even more challenging than usual. The financial position of the council will need to be monitored very closely over the coming months to ensure that steps can be taken to maintain spending within available budgets and to reallocate resources as required. For these reasons, the estimates set out in the report were subject to change as the year end approached and would be dependent on the impact, extent and duration of local and national restrictions going forward.

Forecasting shows that service grouping budgets will overspend by £51.974 million. This overspend position arises from additional expenditure and loss of income associated with the COVID-19 outbreak.

The government has provided four tranches of funding for local authorities for additional costs incurred as a result of COVID-19. This funding is allocated based upon formulae. To date the council has received £45.6 million. Of this, £1.1 million was to cover costs incurred in 2019/20. This leaves funding available of £44.5 million to be applied in 2020/21.

The government has announced an 'Income Guarantee Scheme' to provide financial support for lost sales, fees and charges income. Details of the scheme were published on 23 August 2020. The scheme requires councils to bear the first 5% of any qualifying income loss after which the government will provide a grant for 75% of subsequent losses. A number of areas of income loss such as commercial income and rental income are not covered by the scheme. In addition, any underspends generated in the areas in question must be utilised to offset any lost income.

The council will be required to submit three returns for the Income Guarantee Scheme. The first return for the period to 31 July 2020 was submitted on 2 October 2020 for a total of £3.6 million. At this stage, the council has not received confirmation that this submission has been agreed. An initial estimate is that the council may be able to claim circa £6 million from the Income Guarantee Scheme, although this is subject to further work and the extent of the claims that are made and paid.

The government has indicated that the financial impact of any Collection Fund deficits for council tax and business rates can be spread over three years. It is important to note that these deficits are not being funded by government and will form part of the council's tax base calculation going forward – negatively impacting the funding the council receives from council tax and business rate income. At this stage, after netting off additional Section 31 grant for extended business rate reliefs, the council is forecasting its share of the in-year Collection Fund deficit at £3.9 million. This position could further deteriorate if the county experiences further job losses or business failure over the coming months and is being kept under close review, particularly as we enter the winter period and depending on the extent of local restrictions that are imposed.

After taking account of estimates of cost, lost income and additional government funding, it is forecast that the council will overspend by £0.901 million, representing 0.19% of the net expenditure budget of £466.237 million. This position is caveated at this stage because of the wide range of assumptions that have been made in relation to expenditure and income over the remainder of the financial year and the significant uncertainty that exists.

In terms of service grouping cash limits, the projected revenue outturn is a forecast cash limit underspend of £3.126 million (0.67%). The cash limit position excludes COVID-19 related issues which are considered to be outside of the control of budget managers.

In terms of sums outside the cash limit there is a forecast overspend of £4.027 million which is forecast to result in a reduction in the General Reserve from £23.9 million to £19.9 million. This position will be kept under careful review, especially in relation to the possibility of additional costs and loss of income linked to the ongoing impact of COVID-19.

Total earmarked and cash limit reserves (excluding school reserves) are forecast to reduce by £46.291 million in 2020/21, from £204.697 million to £158.406 million. This mainly results from the utilisation of £23.715 of the Office Accommodation Capital Reserve to fund the new council headquarters and the utilisation of the £17.5 million held in earmarked reserves in relation to Tranche 1 of the government COVID-19 Support Grant. The updated projected capital outturn is £145.755 million.

The estimated outturn for the Council Tax Collection Fund is a deficit of £4.816 million after taking into account the in-year position and deficit brought forward from 2019/20. Durham County Council's share of this forecasted deficit is £4.034 million. The estimated outturn for the Business Rates Collection Fund is a deficit of £43.652 million after taking into account the in-year position and the surplus brought forward from 2019/20. Durham County Council's share (49%) of this estimated deficit is £21.389 million, before accounting for the receipt of compensating Section 31 grant for extended business rate reliefs and discounts.

For MTFP(10), the council has delivered quarter two savings of £7.194 million which is 90% of the £8.010 million target. Since 2011, the council has delivered over £241 million in savings

## **Decision**

We agreed the proposed 'sums outside the cash limit' for approval and the revenue and capital budget adjustments.

We noted the council's overall financial position for 2020/21 and the uncertainty associated with the outturn forecast resulting from the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak as set out in the report. We also noted:

- i. the forecast use of earmarked reserves;
- ii. the forecast end of year position for the cash limit and general reserves;
- iii. the additional costs and income loss faced as a result of COVID-19, offset by additional grant funding provided by government;

- iv. the position on the capital programme and the Collection Funds in respect of Council Tax and Business Rates; and
- v. the amount of savings delivered during quarter two of the MTFP(10) period.

**12. Mid-Year Review Report on Treasury Management for the period to 30 September 2020**  
**Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor A Napier**  
**Contacts - Jeff Garfoot 03000 261 946 and Azhar Rafiq 03000 263 480**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided information on the treasury management mid-year position for 2020/21 including the Council's treasury position, borrowing activity, investment activity, treasury management and prudential indicators.

The Council held £348 million in borrowing and had £263 million cash balances invested at 30 September 2020. During the half year period no additional borrowing was taken out as the council held sufficient cash balances to fund its expenditure. Investments have been undertaken in line with both the CIPFA Code and government guidance which require the Council to invest its funds prudently, and to have regard to the security and liquidity of its investments before seeking the highest rate of return, or yield.

During the half year period to 30 September 2020, the Council has complied with Treasury Management Indicators relating to interest rate exposure, maturity structure of borrowing and sums invested for more than one year. The Council has also complied with Prudential Code Indicators which relate to the capital programme and how much the Council can afford to borrow.

**Decision**

We noted progress with the Treasury Management Strategy 2020/21 and agreed that the overall counterparty limit for Money Market Funds was increased to £125m, with the maximum exposure to a single Money Market Fund increased to £25m.

**13. Mainstream Primary and Secondary Formula Funding 2021-22  
Cabinet Portfolio Holders – Councillor Alan Napier and  
Councillor Olwyn Gunn  
Contacts - Paul Darby 03000 261 930 and David Shirer 03000 268 554**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided an update on the Government announcements regarding the mainstream primary and secondary formula funding for 2021/22. The report recommended that the council continues to use a transitional formula next year, which would align the local formula with the National Funding Formula.

The Schools Block is part of the Dedicated Schools Grant and is the main source of funding for mainstream primary and secondary funding formula, which provides the bulk of funding for these schools. Mainstream primary and secondary funding formulas are set locally by each local authority. There is a single formula for both primary and secondary schools regardless of whether they are a local authority maintained school or an academy. Funding regulations limit the discretion of local authorities to set local formulas and requires that the majority of funding is distributed through pupil-led factors. Information about funding for 2021-22 was released on 20 July 2020 and this confirmed that Councils will still be required to set local formulas in 2021/22.

Nationally, core school funding, which includes the Schools Block will increase by £2.2 billion next year with funding for the Teachers Pay Grant (TPG) and Teachers Pension Employer Contribution Grant (TPECG) becoming part core funding. The estimated funding available for schools in Durham in 2021-22 is £348 million, which is an increase of £28 million compared to 2020-21, with £14 million of this relating to the TPG and TPECG funding that now forms part of the Schools Block.

There have been changes to how deprivation funding is allocated through the National Funding Formula (NFF), however, much of the increase in national funding has been used to increase factor values in the NFF by 3%.

The TPG and TPECG funding that has been rolled into core funding has been used to increase the basic amounts per pupil by a further £180 per primary pupil and £265 per secondary pupil. The minimum per pupil funding guaranteed through the formula has increased to £4,180 per primary pupil and £5,415 per secondary pupil in 2021/22, compared to £3,750 and £5,000 in the current year.

Funding in the NFF for small primary schools in sparsely populated areas, known as sparsity funding, has been substantially increased. The Minimum Funding Guarantee has been made more generous and local formulas can now guarantee an increase of 2.00%.

The council has used a transitional formula in recent years, to smooth the transition from the local formula to the National Funding Formula (NFF). The NFF is still expected to replace local formulas in the future and dictate allocations to individual schools. The transitional approach adopted over recent years will see the local formula in Durham align with the NFF in 2021-22.

An equality impact assessment has been undertaken which has determined that the formula does not differentiate according to any of the protected characteristics except age, which is to recognise differences in the provision required by pupils of different ages. The average funding per pupil for faith schools is less than that for other schools, but this is a result of differences in the proportions of pupils with additional needs.

## **Decision**

We noted the updated position in terms of the mainstream primary and secondary funding formula for the financial year 2021/22 and agreed to the alignment of the local formula as closely as possible to the National Funding Formula in 2021/22.

### **14. Regional Adoption Agency – Full Business Case Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Olwyn Gunn Contact - Paula Gibbons, Head of Regional Adoption Agency**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services which presented the full business case for the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) – Adopt Coast to Coast and set out the partnership model agreement reached by Durham, Cumbria and Together for Children/Sunderland to work collaboratively to develop and deliver their respective adoption services under the leadership of the Regional Adoption Agency Head of Service.

The Council has responded to the Government requirements to move to RAAs where its aspiration is to have fewer organisations recruiting and assessing adopters and having organisations that are operating at much greater scale.

This intention was set out in the Education and Adoption Act 2016 which introduced power in March 2018 for the Secretary of State to require local authorities to carry out their adoption functions jointly.

Significant work has been undertaken since the last report to Cabinet in December 2018 which sought approval for further work to develop a hosted model. A number of practical issues were raised about the hosted model due in the main to the large geographic footprint of the proposed Coast to Coast Adoption Agency.

Following discussions with the Department for Education (DfE) it was agreed to look at alternative models that were being developed nationally. This time period has enabled the Local Authorities to explore a newer RAA Model that provides a better fit for Adopt Coast to Coast.

The Partnership Model is one which the respective Local Authorities believe enables the necessary collaboration to achieve the vision set out by the Government. Adopt Coast to Coast as a Partnership Model will be delivered through a Hub and Spoke structure. The Hub will initially be based in County Durham and has been kept deliberately small and cost effective. It will consist of the RAA Head of Service and a Communications and Marketing Officer and will have access to a number of support services such as Performance and Finance which will be provided in kind from each of the three partners. The Hub costs will be shared equally by each Local Authority. There will be three spokes; Cumbria, Durham and Together for Children. The staff in the spokes will continue to be employed by their existing organisations and work together to achieve the shared vision for Adopt Coast to Coast:

“children will achieve their full potential within a loving and secure family, and everyone affected by adoption will receive a high-quality innovative and sustainable service”

The RAA Head of Service has been appointed and took up the post on 1 September 2020. The line management of the RAA Head of Service will be undertaken by Head of Children’s Social Care, Durham. To meet the Government’s deadline for go live (early Spring 2021) there has been a significant investment of time in developing an agreed model of practice for Adopt Coast to Coast. The modelling has had the advantage of the learning from the RAAs that have gone live both regionally and nationally. The detailed proposals are set out in the Full Business Case which will require agreement by the DfE.

## **Decision**

We approved the Full Business Case for establishing Adopt Coast to Coast Regional Adoption Agency with Cumbria County Council, Durham County Council and Together for Children / Sunderland City Council.

## **15. Overview and Scrutiny Review of GP Services in County Durham**

### **Contact – Stephen Gwilym**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which presented the Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee's review report focusing on GP Services in County Durham.

During 2018/19 the Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee were engaged in a number of applications to review, merge or close General Practitioner (GP) branch services across County Durham. As part of these consultations, members received representations from patients, GP practice staff and councillors regarding the potential cumulative impact of these proposed changes and decided to undertake a review of the provision of and access to GP services across County Durham. The review examined the extent of GP coverage across County Durham including practice numbers, staffing structures and skills mixes, GP appointment capacity and demand including non-attendance rates. The effectiveness of GP service provision as reflected in inspection ratings was considered, as well as patient satisfaction with GP services. Colleagues from the clinical commissioning groups explained existing and future workforce and demographic pressures which may impact upon access to GP services as well as setting out plans to address workforce pressures including the recruitment and retention of GPs and other health professionals. The role of public health, health promotion and ill health prevention together with planning policies and transport initiatives in ensuring that GP services are sustainable and accessible was also assessed.

The Review made a series of recommendations which aim to improve the sustainability and accessibility of GP services across County Durham.

Since the review was undertaken we have been impacted by the greatest medical emergency in our generation and the COVID-19 pandemic had resulted in major changes to the way in which general practice services are being delivered. A number of these changes support recommendations arising from this review including the increased use of technology to facilitate remote consultations and appointments. This experience will hopefully provide reassurance to patients that alongside face to face services, an increase in the use of such technology can be an effective, efficient and safe way of accessing GP services. The review identifies nine recommendations for the Council, CCG, NEAS and CQC to consider and address through partnership working. In addition, the report recommended that a review of progress is undertaken six months after consideration by Cabinet and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

## **Decision**

We endorsed the recommendations contained within the review report and agreed to work in partnership through the Health and Wellbeing Board to deliver the identified improvements.

We also agreed that a review of the progress made against the recommendations contained within the report be undertaken within six months.

### **16. Director of Public Health Annual Report 2020 Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Lucy Hovvels Contact – Amanda Healy – 03000 264 323**

We considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services and the Director of Public Health County Durham which presented the 2020 Annual Report of the Director of Public Health for County Durham.

Under the Health and Social Care Act 2012, one of the statutory requirements of the Director of Public Health is to produce an annual report about the health of the local population. The local authority has a duty to publish the report. The report provides examples work undertaken on the seven priorities that were set out in the 2018 annual report, and has an in-depth focus on giving every child the best start in life and promoting good jobs and places to live, learn and play. It also introduces a new evidence-based Approach to Wellbeing that has been developed and will be used to help empower our communities and build their resilience. In the year ahead the Council will continue to work closely with partners and communities to protect and improve the health and wellbeing of people in County Durham. As ever, reducing health inequalities is a core principle that will guide the work.

## **Decision**

We received the 2020 annual report of the Director of Public Health, County Durham and agreed the publication of the annual report.