



Report of Cabinet

Electoral division(s) affected:

All

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide information to the Council on issues considered by the Cabinet at the meeting held on 16 June 2021 to enable Members to ask related questions.

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16 June 2021

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**1. Levelling Up Fund [Key Decision No: REG/03/21]
Cabinet Portfolio Holders – Councillors Elizabeth Scott,
Richard Bell, and James Rowlandson
Contacts: Heather Orton 03000 264715, Craig MacLennan
03000 267103, Ray Brewis 03000 264708**

In accordance with paragraph 19(a) of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, the following key decision was exempt from the call-in procedure due to the urgent nature of the decision being made. The public notice set out that the funding rules require the submission of the bid by the 18th of June, and if the call in rules were not disapplied, the Council would have missed the opportunity to bid for this funding at that time.

We considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration Economy and Growth and Interim Corporate Director of Resources which provided an overview of the guidance and bidding requirements for access to the Levelling Up Fund. The report sought approval of the ongoing process for the Council to develop and prioritise potential proposals across County Durham and the submission of one first round levelling up bid for the Bishop Auckland Parliamentary Constituency, covering projects for the South West Durham area. The report outlined the proposed approach to submissions for round one and identified a £4.78 million match funding requirement to lever an initial £20 million Levelling Up Fund investment towards the proposed South West Durham scheme.

In the 2021 budget, Central Government announced the new Levelling Up Fund (LUF), to provide investment in regeneration and growth in places with low productivity and poor connectivity. County Durham is identified as one of the areas of greatest need of levelling up in the UK and has been classified as a Tier 1 area by Central Government.

Beyond the announcement of the LUF, the Government White Paper on levelling up is expected in the Autumn 2021 and is expected to set out a more comprehensive position on what levelling up will mean nationally. For County Durham, levelling up will require a blend of investments that create different outcomes for communities. This will include place-based regeneration that improves the quality of our city, towns and villages, alongside broader investments to unlock sites for housing and employment and support the labour market.

Further guidance for the round one levelling up bids was released in March and April 2021. The LUF is a competitive fund totalling £4 billion for England, with £600 million made available for Round One bids. Appendix two of the report provided the key headlines).

Each parliamentary constituency within the local authority area can submit one bid. Local authorities can only have one successful bid for each of their

parliamentary constituencies over the lifecycle of the Fund, which is expected to run over three phases or bidding rounds. County Durham, with six parliamentary constituencies is therefore able to submit six bids up to the value of £120 million. Government guidance suggests that a minimum of 10 percent match funding is required in support of each bid.

Local authorities are the accountable body for all bids and the guidance is clear that engagement with, and the support of, the local Member of Parliament for each area is required. There is also an opportunity for a wider regional transport bid of up to £50 million which need to be supported by the seven local authorities that constitute the Joint Transport Committee for the wider region. Bids of up to £20 million per parliamentary constituency can include a maximum of three cohesively connected projects and must be delivered with financial completion by March 2024. Business cases must demonstrate need, deliverability, strategic fit and value for money. Round one criteria highlight three priority areas for scheme investment:

- Transport;
- Regeneration and town centres; and
- Cultural investment.

The Government has specified that projects should target improvements in pockets of deprivation and contribute towards carbon net zero targets. The deadline for submitting a Round One proposal for 2021/22 funding awards was 18 June 2021, with priority given to projects that can commence capital spend on the ground in 2021/22. Successful bids will be announced in the Autumn. Government has been very clear that projects must be ready to deliver and have an advanced business case for this deadline, which realistically means that only those projects that were at an advanced stage and “shovel ready” at the March 2021 announcement could reasonably be submitted for the 18 June 2021 deadline.

Government has stated that there will be future opportunities to bid in subsequent rounds for delivery up to 31 March 2024, or exceptionally into 2024/25 for larger schemes.

Local authorities, as responsible bodies for developing the bids, have received £125,000 capacity funding to support the development of future bids, however, it is expected that the development costs of a full programme of levelling up proposals will be substantially higher than this allocation. An earmarked reserve of £1 million has been created to accommodate the estimated cost of developing robust bids for future bidding rounds.

The Council will be seeking a range of appropriate investments across County Durham for future bidding rounds to support transport connectivity, culture,

heritage and regeneration in the city, town centres and villages. Schemes put forward will be based on the needs of each community.

The Council is fully committed over the three phases of the levelling up funding to seek investment for each of our six Parliamentary Constituencies of up to £120 million Levelling Up Funding in total across all the bids. Based in the bid criteria, one bid had been sufficiently developed and was capable of submission by the 18 June 2021 deadline. This proposal addressed socio-economic needs, transport barriers and cultural ambitions within its locality. A summary of the Bishop Constituency Parliamentary area bid, a rural connectivity and a cultural programme was outlined in the report. The total forecast cost of the three linked investments was £30.93 million with pan existing £2.25 million match funding to the Locomotion element of the programme through the Science Museum Group and £3.9 million across the existing County Council capital programme. The report sought approval for £4.78 million of additional capital investment in support of these proposals, accommodated from the capital contingencies.

To meet the tight delivery timescales and spend requirements within 2021/22, additional development costs would be incurred to secure planning, acquire land and procure delivery arrangements in advance of notification of whether the bid had been successful.

The Council is, with this and all future levelling up proposals, required to continue to develop projects at risk whilst funding bids are assessed by Central Government. The costs of developing projects would be met from earmarked reserves.

It was proposed that ambitious bids for the remaining five parliamentary constituencies were developed in line with anticipated timelines for Rounds Two and Three, with robust business cases that meet local priorities and satisfy national guidelines for Levelling Up. Any match funding requirements for these bids need to be considered as part of the capital bidding process for MTFP(12).

Decision

We:

- (a) agreed the draft outline approach for the Levelling Up submission for Round One and supported a first round submission for investment across South West Durham within the identified Bishop Auckland Constituency;
- (b) agreed the total scheme costs at an estimated £30.93 million and a LUF ask of the maximum of £20 million towards the cost of the proposed scheme;

- (c) agreed to fund an additional £4.78 million of capital investment from Council capital contingencies to meet the funding gap that existed with regards to these proposals;
- (d) noted that additional capacity funds will be required alongside the £125,000 received from Government to develop robust Green Book Business Cases for Future Rounds that will meet LUF requirements. This funding is committed to support the development of business cases across the County and will be funded from a £1 million earmarked reserve established at year end 2020/21;
- (e) delegated authority to the Corporate Director for Regeneration, Economy and Growth and Corporate Director of Resources, in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships and the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Resources Investments and Assets and Deputy Leader and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance to take all such decisions necessary to progress and finalise Levelling Up proposals for Round One;
- (f) noted that further reports will be presented to Cabinet in the Autumn on the further bidding phases, which will seek ambitious Levelling Up proposals for the remaining five Parliamentary constituencies;
- (g) agreed that the overall commitment of the Council is to bid for and secure an ambitious programme across all parliamentary constituencies in the county from this fund and to seek to maximise funding with strong proposals for every eligible area in future bidding rounds;
- (h) noted that the match funding requirements for future bids will need to form part of the capital bidding process for MTFP(12).

**2. COVID-19 Commissioning of Designated Settings
Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Paul Sexton
Contact: Neil Jarvis 03000 265683**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services which outlined a delegated decision taken by the Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services and provided an update on the commissioning of Designated Settings during the COVID-19 pandemic following the Government requirement for the Council, along with all Local Authorities (LA), to commission Designated Settings within care homes to provide a safe alternative for people who are temporarily unable to return to their usual place of residence due to their COVID status. The report outlined the delegated

decision to commission such beds given the urgent timescales required by the pandemic and Government direction.

The report set out the commissioning approach across County Durham and the instances when people may need to access this provision. Designated Setting Beds were jointly commissioned with County Durham CCG (CDCCG). The units include dedicated staffing and entrances/exits that can temporarily support people who were COVID positive. Specific hospital discharge funding allocated to CDCCG covered the cost of the beds. The report described how the requirement for beds may need to flex over time and how contracts had been developed to ensure that the number of beds commissioned could change in line with need.

Decision

We recommended to note the delegated decision dated 17 November 2020 taken by the Corporate Director for Adult and Health Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Adult and Health Services, in accordance with the Officer Scheme of Delegation, Part 3, Table 1, paragraph 12 of the Constitution.

3. Safe Durham Partnership Plan 2021-25 Cabinet Portfolio Holder: Councillor John Shuttleworth Contact: Gordon Elliott 03000 263605

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate change which presented the Safe Durham Partnership Plan (SDPP) 2021-25 for endorsement, prior to final sign off by full Council.

Section 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires the responsible authorities (commonly referred to collectively as a Community Safety Partnership (CSP)) in a local government area to work together in formulating and implementing strategies to tackle local crime and disorder in the area. In County Durham this is the Safe Durham Partnership.

The 2007 Regulations set out the way in which the responsible authorities should carry out their functions as a CSP under Section 6 of the Act, and require the preparation of:

- a) a partnership plan for the local government area, setting out the CSP's priorities.
- b) a county level community safety agreement, setting out the ways the responsible authorities in the county might work more effectively to implement the identified priorities by joint working.

The SDPP 2021-25 has been aligned to the Durham Police, Crime and Victims Plan and the Cleveland and Durham Local Criminal Justice Partnership Plan.

COVID-19 has had a huge impact on how Durham County Council and its partners deliver services, especially health and social care services to ensure those who need to access vital services still receive them, whilst also supporting providers who run essential services. Many of the actions in the current strategy have supported the approach in these unprecedented times.

This SDPP 2021-25 also considers the impact COVID-19 has on partners, communities and services and any COVID-19 related actions are included.

The report provided details of the consultation process and the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) undertaken as part of the process for developing the plan. The SDPP 2021-25 was agreed by the Safe Durham Partnership at its meeting on the 12 March 2021.

We noted the Safe Durham Partnership Plan 2021-25; and recommended it for approval by Council.

4. Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2025
Cabinet Portfolio Holders: Councillor Paul Sexton and
Councillor Ted Henderson
Contact: Gordon Elliott 03000 263605

We considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change, Corporate Director of Adults and Health Services, Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Service and the Director of Public Health which presented the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS) 2021-2025 for endorsement.

The JHWS is a legal requirement under the Health and Social Care Act 2012, to ensure health and social care agencies work together to agree services and initiatives which should be prioritised. The Health and Wellbeing Board has the responsibility to deliver the JHWS, which is informed by the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), as part of Durham Insight, which is an assessment of the current and future health, wellbeing and social care needs of residents in County Durham.

The JHWS 2021-25 has been aligned to the Director of Public Health Annual Report 2020, the Marmot 10 Year Review and the County Durham Place Based Commissioning and Delivery Plan 2020-25. It recognises proposals in

the Department of Health and Social Care's 'Integration and Innovation: Working together to improve health and social care for all' white paper, which sets out the Government's legislative proposals for a Health and Care Bill.

COVID-19 has had a huge impact on how Durham County Council and its partners deliver services, especially health and social care services to ensure those who need to access vital services still receive them, whilst also supporting providers who run essential services. Many of the actions in the current strategy have supported the approach in these unprecedented times.

Utilising the approach to wellbeing, work has taken place with communities and the voluntary and community sector to support residents who have shielded, those self-isolating and those who have no other support networks.

This JHWS 2021-25 also considered the COVID-19 impact on partners, communities and services and any included and COVID-19 actions.

The strategy took account of any governance changes, for example, the inclusion of the Physical Activity Strategy Committee as a sub-group of the Health and Wellbeing Board, to ensure greater alignment with physical and mental wellbeing and physical activity and healthy weight.

A range of consultation, detailed in the report, had been undertaken on the strategy. The consultation feedback had been used to inform the JHWS 2021-25. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) had been undertaken as part of the process for developing the JHWS. The JHWS 2021-25 was agreed by the Health and Wellbeing Board at its meeting on 18 March 2021.

Decision

We received and endorsed the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-25.

5. Area Action Partnerships and Member Neighbourhood Budgets – Proposed Operating Arrangements 2021/22 Cabinet Portfolio Holder: Councillor Elizabeth Scott Contact: Gordon Elliott 03000 263605

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhood Services which set out the proposed approach for Area Action Partnership (AAP) Boards and Teams to return to a greater local presence as the County emerges from the effects of the COVID – 19 Pandemic. The report provided details of the funding to be allocated to AAPs and Elected Members together with how it would be managed, including proposed changes to the

requirements and procedures around the allocation of funding to ensure AAPs comply with best practice and the Council's procedures.

As the country continued its efforts to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic and return to a semblance of 'normal life,' arrangements are being put in place to ensure AAPs can safely connect and be accessible to local communities. These arrangements will build on the lessons learnt during the last year and recognise that an immediate return to a pre-COVID way of working will neither be possible or desirable. The report outlined the steps that would hopefully be taken over the coming months to return to a greater community presence.

Despite having to adapt to new ways of working during the pandemic, AAPs had played a vital role in supporting individuals and communities to deal with the many impacts it has had on life since the first lockdown in March 2020.

AAP teams were instrumental in setting up and staffing the COVID telephone helpline established by the Council and subsequently oversaw the allocation of funding to support hundreds of local projects that provided vital support to thousands of vulnerable people.

In recognition of that role, as well as the previous eleven years of work, AAPs have been allocated additional funds to support communities to recover as well as tackle the Council's aim to revitalise towns and villages.

The report detailed these additional funds and proposed how they would be managed and sub-divided between the AAP Boards and Elected Members. AAPs had been in operation for over 12 years and had achieved many successes. They have supported thousands of local projects, secured millions of pounds in match funding, inputted into many consultations by the Council and its partners and critically, supported elected members in their roles as community champions.

There had been a number of recent changes to the Council's operating procedures and regulations, as well as in the broader 'support community', that the report proposes need to be reflected in the procedures for AAPs. These included changes to the declaration of interest in relation to Neighbourhood Budget and the required make-up of management committees for applicant organisations.

The report concluded by recognising that as the county hopefully moved out of lockdown, the full effects of the pandemic on communities will not be known, and further changes may be required to ensure the AAPs can maximise their impact as efficiently as possible.

Decision

We agreed :

- (c) that AAP Terms of Reference be amended in order to allow provision for AAP Board meetings to be held as hybrid meetings, should individual boards agree to do so;
- (d) to amalgamate the five budget headings: DCC Area Budget, Older People's Social Isolation Fund, Youth Grant, Welfare Reform Grant and the £100,000 COVID Recovery grant into a single 'Area Budget' Fund of £244,902 per AAP, of which a minimum of £125,000 will need to be defrayed in the current financial year;
- (e) that each Elected Member's Neighbourhood Budget will be enhanced with a one-off allocation of £10,000 for spend to support the revitalisation of towns and villages, with the funding awarded to AAPs reduced to £210,000 to offset these amendments;
- (f) the capacity for Elected Members to spend on small projects (between £100 to £999) be increased to £3,000 per annum for the period up to 31 March 2023;
- (g) the proposed information requirements from Elected Members if they intend to roll forward unspent Neighbourhood Budget allocations beyond year two of their period of office;
- (h) to the introduction of a new Area Budget / Neighbourhood Budget Application form;
- (i) that work will be carried out with the nominated AAP Chairs to develop the criteria for a Countywide AAP fund;
- (j) the changes to the Declaration of Interest process for Councillors when proposing schemes for Neighbourhood Budget spend in order that it is in line with the member Code of Conduct.

6. Review of DLI Collection Archive and the Future of the DLI Building and Grounds
Cabinet Portfolio Holders: Councillors James Rowlandson, Elizabeth Scott and Councillor Richard Bell
Contacts: Amy Harhoff 03000 276333, Paul Darby Tel: 03000 261030

We considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration Economy and Growth and the Interim Corporate Director of Resources which provided details of a review of the proposed arrangements for the care, storage and display of the Durham Light Infantry Collection, archive, museum building and grounds. This is a key priority to review and ensure that the proud and significant military history of County Durham is recognised.

On 21 October 2015, the Cabinet agreed to new arrangements for the storage and display of the DLI collection which included the storage of items at the Sevenhills facility and proposals for the loan of items to a number of venues including Palace Green Library, Bishop Auckland Town Hall, Spennymoor, Newton Aycliffe and Seaham. This was part of an approach to widening the exposure of the history of the DLI to wider groups whilst also achieving medium term financial plan (MTFP) savings.

More substantive arrangements for a permanent display were agreed by Cabinet on 17 January 2018 where, as part of consideration of a report on the development of the Aykley Heads site as a strategic employment site and the relocation of the DCC Headquarters to the city centre, a new History Centre development, which included a permanent display for the DLI collection, was agreed. Subsequent to that report, further updates on the development of the History Centre had been considered by Cabinet on 17 October 2018 and 16 January 2019.

The new History Centre has a capital budget of £19.6 million for the renovation and the addition of an extension to the Grade II listed building where the centre would be located.

Kier Construction Limited was awarded the contract following competitive procurement and commenced on site on in April 2021. The Joint Administration is seeking to review the options for the future storage, care and display of the DLI collection. An options appraisal will be produced to include a full assessment of opportunities, costs, risks and other funding availability. This will also include an impact assessment on the plans for the new History Centre, with the outcome considered by Cabinet by September 2021.

Since the moving of the DLI Collection to Sevenhills, the former DLI Museum building has been vacant, and its future has yet to be determined. A full condition report will be developed, to understand the options available. Interim measures to improve the area will be undertaken.

Decision

We agreed the preparation of an options appraisal for the future display and storage of DLI collection and that a further update report is provided to Cabinet by September 2021.

7. **Review of Durham County Council Headquarters**
Cabinet Portfolio Holders: Councillors James Rowlandson, Elizabeth Scott and Councillor Richard Bell
Contacts: Amy Harhoff 03000 276333, Paul Darby Tel: 03000 261030

We considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth and the Interim Corporate Director of Resources which set out a proposal to review the options for use of the newly constructed Durham County Council Headquarters (HQ) at The Sands in Durham City. The report also set out an approach for reviewing the options for the Council's HQ functions.

The report reflected Durham County Council's newly appointed Joint Administration's commitment to review the options for Durham County Council's Headquarters including reviewing the use of the newly built HQ building on The Sands in Durham City and having regard for the growth and employment opportunities at Aykley Heads in Durham City. The review will be undertaken as quickly as possible whilst ensuring appropriate due diligence is in place.

The decision to relocate the Council's HQ to a new building at The Sands in Durham City and to develop Aykley Heads as a strategic employment site was agreed by Cabinet on 17 January 2018 in a report entitled "Aykley Heads Strategic Employment Site, DCC HQ Full Business Case and Future Options for the County Archive." Cabinet also considered an exempt report on the same date which set out the outcome of the procurement exercise to construct the new HQ including the costings for the development.

The 17 January 2018 reports were preceded by earlier reports considering the strategic need for development and the outline business case for the proposals.

The construction of the new HQ building has a capital budget of £49.1 million. Kier Construction Limited was awarded the contract following a competitive procurement exercise and subsequently work on site commenced in 2018. The building is substantially built with practical completion expected in October 2021.

The Joint Administration is seeking to review the options for utilising the new building at The Sands, Durham City. Work on considering those options was to commence immediately on agreement of the report and included a site visit to the new building by lead Members. The Joint Administration wish to ensure that:

- the options for the location of HQ functions take account of the review of the new building whilst assessing the options for the existing HQ site at Aykley Heads, as well as considering any post-Covid recovery issues;
- the strategic employment site proposals for Aykley Heads are fully considered as part of the review;
- a report is brought back to Cabinet at the earliest opportunity, and not later than September 2021.

The report proposed that an options appraisal be prepared which to include a full assessment of opportunities, costs, risks, and the implications of any proposals that are proposed to be brought forward.

Decision

We agreed that an options appraisal be prepared, as set out in paragraph 6 of the report and that a further update report is provided to Cabinet, by September 2021 at the latest.

Councillor A Hopgood
Leader of the Council

6 July 2021