

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

At a Meeting of **Cabinet** held in the **Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham** on **Wednesday 13 October 2021** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor A Hopgood in the Chair

Cabinet Members:

Councillors R Bell, T Henderson, S McDonnell, J Rowlandson, E Scott, P Sexton, A Shield, J Shuttleworth and M Wilkes.

Also Present:

Councillors Blakey, Hood, Hutchinson, Johnson, Jopling, Marshall, Stead, Surtees, Sutton-Lloyd and Townsend

1 Public Questions

There were no public questions. However, the Leader advised that she had agreed that Councillor Fred Langley from Shildon Town Council could make a short statement in respect of item 8, Greenfield Community College, Future Options, after the report had been presented.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 15 September 2021 and 29 September 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 Declarations of interest

Councillors Hopgood and Rowlandson both declared an 'other' relevant interest in respect of item 13 as they were both members/substitute members of the Newcastle Airport Holding Company.

4 Medium Term Financial Plan(12) 2022/23-2025/26 [Key Decision: CORP/R/21/02]

The Cabinet considered a report of the Interim Corporate Director of Resources which provided an update on the current forecast position for the 2022/23 budget and the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP(12), 2022/23 to 2025/26, factoring in working assumptions in terms of Council Tax increases. Final budget setting and Council Tax increase proposals will be considered by Full Council on 23 February 2022 (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Councillor R Bell thanked the Interim Corporate Director and Officers for the updated Medium Term Financial Plan which would be further updated in December. Councillor Bell explained the importance that those on low incomes were protected and informed the Cabinet that a report to further extend the LTCSG would be considered by the County Council later in the month. Once the Government had published the comprehensive spending review the Council would be able to firm up some assumptions made in the report once they had been studied in detail. The ongoing impacts from COVID 19 meant that the budget must continue to be managed for the medium term and the report presented provided the Cabinet with a platform to do that. In closing, Councillor Bell hoped that the uncertainty that existed currently would hopefully be resolved by the end of the year.

The Leader of the Council thanked officers for their diligent and hard work, the prudent financial budget assumptions and the robust arrangements that were currently in place. Councillor Hopgood added that much had changed in terms of financial forecasts, however, it was important to note that the net position was broadly in line with what the Cabinet considered at its meeting in July.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

5 Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which sought approval to formally adopt the first three Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) for Chester-le-Street, Durham City and Newton Aycliffe (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Cllr E Scott welcomed the report and explained the importance of the infrastructure plans which were extremely important for active travel to schools, workplaces, shops and other key destinations.

The plans would increase participation and active travel whilst also providing an accessible network for people to use. Councillor Scott thanked all stakeholders in all three areas who had contributed and helped shape network plans and welcome the input of local users and partner organisation.

Cllr J Shuttleworth highlighted the importance of the infrastructure for active travel which the Cabinet was committed to working with all stakeholder groups in achieving.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

6 Armed Forces Covenant

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which presented the refreshed Armed Forces Covenant for endorsement and for agreement for signature at a formal covenant signing ceremony (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Cllr P Sexton spoke of the importance of building on the work carried out in 2012 and 2018 and wished to maintain these achievements. The Council were working hard towards revalidation and refreshing the Armed Forces covenant.

Cllr A Shield explained that the armed forces contribution to both the county and the country was beyond measure and should never be taken for granted. The importance of the covenant was a commitment from the Council which would be supported appropriately through multiple measures.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

7 The National Bus Strategy, Enhanced Partnerships and Bus Service Improvement Plan update

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which advised of the role the County Council is playing in responding to the Government's National Bus Strategy and associated activity for the process of implementing an Enhanced Partnership and Bus Service Improvement Plan for the region.

The report set out the potential impact this may have in the County and update Cabinet of progress to date, the commitment to ensure the best possible outcome for the County advised on the timescale for the implementation of the Enhanced Partnership (for copy of report see file of minutes).

In response to a question asked by Cllr S Deinali on behalf of Cllr C Marshall, Councillor E Scott informed the Cabinet that both members and officers had been working as part of the North East Joint Transport Committee in developing a Bus Service Improvement Plan to help deliver a positive outcome for the region.

Whilst the Cabinet shared the wider ambitions of the Joint Transport Committee, there were some essential components of the public transport network which were important to residents. Four important areas had already been identified in protecting the current bus service network, improving fares for young people, an adult fares cap and an enhanced public transport network.

Councillor E Scott and officers had been working with the region to help put together an ambitious bid for the north east. If the bid attracted government funding it would, in her opinion, help transform public transport in the coming years and help address some of the many longstanding inequalities faced by County Durham residents.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

8 Greenfield Community College - Future Options

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services which presented future options for the provision of education at Greenfield Community College in order that a solution is found to current challenges, sufficiency, building conditions, and impact of the split site model on the breadth and quality of the curriculum (for copy of report see file of minutes)

The Leader of the Council then invited Cllr F Langley of Shildon Town Council to read out his statement. Councillor Langley's statement set out reasons as to why he felt the Cabinet should explore additional options for Greenfield Community College.

Councillor T Henderson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services explained that Shildon had three very strong primary schools where pupils had traditionally gone to both Sunnydale and Bishop Auckland Schools.

The trend for a larger majority to attend Bishop Auckland schools started well over a decade ago. Scenarios in which all children attended a school in Shildon are therefore unrealistic and would still not address DfE requirements for viable schools.

Councillor M Johnson then asked questions on behalf of Cllr S Quinn and Cllr O Gunn and two questions of his own.

Councillor T Henderson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services responded to each question individually.

In relation to the question asked on behalf of Councillor S Quinn, Councillor T Henderson explained that new schools in Bishop Auckland and Newton Aycliffe were part of the priority school building project and school rebuilding programme commissioned by DfE. The location of their sites must take into consideration the nearest source of the school population.

In relation to the question asked on behalf of Cllr O Gunn regarding consultation, Councillor T Henderson explained that the consultation document would be circulated to staff, governors and parents of Greenfield. In addition, it would be made available to primary schools in Shildon and Aycliffe, to secondary schools in Aycliffe and Bishop Auckland. The AAP would bring it to the attention of Town Councils. Documentation would also be posted on the Durham County Council's website and placed in local libraries and leisure centres.

Councillor M Johnson asked two questions which concerned pupil numbers and pupil place planning. In his response Councillor T Henderson explained that there was no evidence to suggest that new build schools would attract more pupils. Councillor T Henderson also explained that pupil place planning could be affected by a number of factors but especially Ofsted inspections and that the Cabinet were trying to give Greenfield Community College the resources and infrastructure which would secure strong outcomes and progress for all pupils.

Councillor S Townsend then asked four questions relating to the Middridge Lane site options, crime, equality impact and government policy to which Councillor T Henderson responded to.

Councillor M Stead asked a question relating to the current hire and energy costs used to heat the porta cabins and how much it was costing for the new electric connections. In response, Cllr T Henderson, explained that the cost of sustaining the current set up at Greenfield was not sustainable and money had been wasted on temporary remedies when a long-term solution was required.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

9 Consideration of an Ecological Emergency in County Durham

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate which requested Cabinet to consider the establishment of a working group to investigate the merits and consequences of Durham County Council declaring an ecological emergency, including the evidence base for the decision at a local level and the expected outcomes (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Councillor A Surtees asked two questions on behalf of Councillor E Adam regarding the scrutiny around the declaration of an Ecological Emergency.

Councillor M Wilkes responded that the joint administration was committed to ensuring that the knowledge and expertise of Councillors on Scrutiny, as well as our partners across the County was recognised and contributed to the future of the County and the involvement of scrutiny in this important work was sensible and appropriate.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

10 Director of Public Health Annual Report 2021

The Cabinet considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Adult and Health Service and the Director of Public Health which presented the 2021 Annual report of the Director of Public Health for County Durham (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

11 Exclusion of the Public

Resolved:

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

Councillors A Hopgood and J Rowlandson left the meeting.

Councillor R Bell in the Chair

12 Newcastle International Airport Limited (NIAL) Update [Key Decision: CORP/R/21/06]

The Cabinet considered a report of the Interim Corporate Director of Resources which provided an update on Newcastle International Airport Limited (NIAL) (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.