

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a **Meeting of Cabinet** held in the **Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham** on **Wednesday 15 December 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 and M Wilkes

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Shield and J Shuttleworth

1 Public Questions

The Leader advised that a question had been received from Mr D Woods, Chair of Ludworth Community Centre, however as he was not present to ask his question at the meeting a written response would be provided.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations.

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

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided an overview of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Comprehensive Spending Review announcements on 27 October 2021.

The report considered the impact upon the development of the 2022/23 budget and the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP(12), 2022/23 to 2025/26 report and provided an update on a range of budget pressures that will need to be accommodated next year, including the ongoing impact of the pandemic on waste budgets (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Councillor R Bell thanked officers for the report which provided an update and overview following the comprehensive spending review announcement on 27 October. He explained that the government had recognised some of the pressures faced by the sector and despite the fiscal constraints of the national debt had found the resource to invest in the sector which is welcomed. He advised that there was still uncertainty on the impact for this council and anticipated that clarity would be provided once the local government finance settlement was received hopefully on Thursday. He thanked the Corporate Director and officers for the work undertaken, and also that they would need to do over the Christmas period in preparation of a report to go to Cabinet in January.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

5 Quarter Two, 2021/22 Performance Management Report

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

The Leader in welcoming the comprehensive report advised that the performance continues to be impacted by the pandemic which is likely to continue for some time. She highlighted how the pandemic is affecting services, and of the issues that the council is seeking to address. She thanked all staff and partners of the council for going above and beyond in working in these difficult times, and referenced the prestigious awards recently received by the council.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

6 Poverty Issues

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided information on the most recent welfare, economic and poverty indicators for the county. The report also provided an update on expenditure which specifically supports poverty related activities and the progress of the Council and partners in addressing and alleviating poverty, including the response to the negative financial impacts arising from the COVID-19 pandemic (for copy of report see file of minutes)

Councillors McDonnell and Bell advised how the issue was a complex one, and that poverty manifests itself in many ways. They recognised the work of partners, and voluntary sector, and welcomed the refreshed action plan which will come to Cabinet in March next year. It was suggested that awareness of the refreshed plan once ready would be provided to the public, and through a briefing session given to all members of the council.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

7 Mainstream Primary and Secondary Formula Funding 2022/23

The Cabinet considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Service and the Corporate Director of Resources which provided an overview of the forecast Dedicated Schools Grant School Block and proposed local formula for 2022/23, with the proposal that the Council continues to align the mainstream primary and secondary formula funding in 2022/23 with the National Funding Formula (NFF) (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Councillor T Henderson thanked the Corporate Director for the report. He explained how this formula would be for all maintained primary and secondary schools next year, which essentially is a continuation of this year's formula however with one major change being to the sparsity funding. A consultation has taken place with the Schools Forum which all schools were able to feed into.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

8 Council Homes Programme Update

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which set out the strategic rationale behind the Council Homes programme and updated Cabinet on the progress to date, seeking approval to commence work on the second phase of the programme. The report also outlined the Council's strategy for the development of new council homes within the rural west of the county (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Councillor Rowlandson gave an overview of the position, and the steps being taken to move the programme forward which would include development for the rural west.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

9 County Durham Inclusive Economic Strategy

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which set out a proposal to develop a county-wide inclusive economic strategy. The report outlined that in the development of the strategy and the detail of what is proposed, inclusivity is the key priority for the Council and the county's strategy. The report included the findings of an economic review undertaken earlier in the year and sought agreement for an economic statement to be used as a basis for conversations with stakeholders until the new strategy is agreed in Autumn 2022 (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Councillor E Scott advised of the exciting and interesting opportunity that would affect every family and community in the county, and provide for inclusive growth. She advised that from January to April the public, communities and business would be able to take part in conversations with the council on issues they face, which would be considered and feed into developing a new strategy that would be considered by Cabinet in the autumn of 2022.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

10 Exclusion of the Public

Resolved:

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

11 Bishop Auckland Economic Growth Asset Strategy [Key Decision: REG/06/21]

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which set out a strategy for economic growth and the wider regeneration of Bishop Auckland (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Resolved

That the recommendations in the report be approved.