

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Cabinet** held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Wednesday 6 April 2022 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor A Hopgood (Leader of the Council) in the Chair

Cabinet Members:

Councillors R Bell (Deputy Leader of the Council), S McDonnell, J Rowlandson, E Scott, P Sexton, A Shield, J Shuttleworth and M Wilkes

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor T Henderson

Also Present:

Councillors J Blakey, B Coult, J Elmer, C Hood, P Jopling and D Sutton-Lloyd

1 Public Questions

There were no public questions received for this part of the meeting.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Proposal to close the Sunnydale site of Greenfield Community College on 31 August 2022 and rebuild the Newton Aycliffe Site (Key Decision: CYPs/01/2022)

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services that sought approval to close the Sunnydale site of Greenfield Community College on 31 August 2022 and rebuild the Newton Aycliffe site, taking account of the Local Authority's duties as prescribed in the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to secure sufficient places and to ensure good outcomes for all children and young people in the local area (for copy of report see file of minutes).

A written response would be made to a member of the public who had submitted a question in relation to this item and also item 8.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

5 Declaration of an Ecological Emergency (Key Decision: NCC/03/22)

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change that responded to the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee report to Cabinet on the consideration of an ecological emergency. Cabinet were asked to formally declare an ecological emergency for County Durham (for copy of report see file of minutes).

The Leader welcomed to the meeting the Chair and Vice Chair of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Bev Coult, Chair of the Committee presented to Cabinet the work of the Committee. She gave the background in that Cabinet had requested that the Overview and Scrutiny undertake a review, and report back to Cabinet within six months, having considered the evidence in relation to biodiversity decline and make a recommendation in relation to declaration of an ecological emergency.

She advised of the meetings that had taken place receiving evidence from the Neighbourhoods and Climate Change Service Grouping and from partners of biodiversity decline at an international, national, regional and local level. The committee recognised that the Council and partners have undertaken many projects to restore and protect wildlife and habitats in the county with its semi-natural habitats were clearly under significant pressure and the loss or poor condition of these habitats would impact negatively on local species.

The evidence presented clearly showed declines in various bird species, herptiles; mammals; fish; butterflies and extinction or significant decline in bumblebee species at a local level.

The Chair of the Ecological Emergency Workstream of the Environment and Climate Change Partnership and Director of the North Pennines AONB attended the February meeting and confirmed that there was an ecological emergency and that there had been a catastrophic decline in nature resulting in an ecological crisis.

Councillor Coult advised that having considered the evidence provided it was unanimously agreed by the Committee to recommend to Cabinet that DCC declares an ecological emergency. In addition, it was also agreed by members that should Cabinet decide to declare then Cabinet also considers further additional recommendations which were detailed within the report.

Councillor Wilkes thanked the Chair and Vice Chair and the committee for this work, they had responded to the challenge set them and had produced this thorough report in the timeline set. He supported the recommendation to declare an ecological emergency and advised that officers would now bring this to life by coming forward with an action plan to tackle this. Councillors Rowlandson and Bell also advised of their support for the declaration being made.

Resolved:

The recommendations in the report be approved.

6 Annual Review of Constitution

The Cabinet considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer to present the Constitution, as updated following the annual review, for adoption by Council (for copy or report see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

7 County Durham Plan: Parking and Accessibility, Developer Contributions and Residential Amenity Supplementary Planning Documents

The Cabinet considered the report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth to seek Cabinet's approval to commence consultation on the second draft of the Parking and Accessibility Supplementary Planning Document, the first draft of the Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document and minor alterations to the Residential Amenity Supplementary Planning Document. All three documents supported the recently adopted County Durham Plan (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

8 Updated SEND Strategy for County Durham 2022-24

The Cabinet considered the report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services that introduced a new Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy for the county to be adopted for the period 2022-24 (for copy of report see file of minutes).

A written response would be made to a member of the public who had submitted a question in advance of the meeting in relation to this item and the report at item 4.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

9 High Needs Block Funding for SEND and Inclusion Support

The Cabinet considered the report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services that provided an update on spend and pressures on the High Needs Block (HNB) of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), which supported Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and inclusion support services for children and young people living in County Durham.

The 2021/22 forecast financial outturn position was outlined, along with the latest five-year financial plan and project updates, which collectively aimed to help ensure HNB spending was maintained within budget and the accumulated deficit in the HNB was recovered between 2020/21-2024/25 (for copy of report see file of Minutes).

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

10 Apprenticeship Strategy 2022-2025

The Cabinet considered the report of the Corporate Director of Resources to adopt the council's updated Apprenticeship Strategy for the period 2022 – 2025 (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

11 Poverty Strategy and Action Plan

The Cabinet considered the report of the Corporate Director of Resources that provided an update on the work to ensure there was a coherent and co-ordinated strategic approach, both within the council and across the Council's partners to address poverty across County Durham.

The report sought approval to consult on a revised County Durham Poverty Action Plan which sets out a comprehensive response to the impacts of the wide-ranging poverty issues within the county (for copy of report see file of minutes).

The Leader advised that Councillor Surtees had submitted questions on this item however as she had not been present to ask her questions in person a written response would be made after the meeting.

Councillors Shield thanked the Corporate Director and his team, and the work of the poverty action steering group in bringing this report to Cabinet. He advised that poverty was a complex issue which manifests itself in many ways, its causes and impacts are multifaceted, and holds back many communities across the county. He explained the council's response to tackling this which included having a strong economic strategy, raising aspirations, providing opportunities for all, and by doing this by working in partnership. He emphasised that alongside this was the provision of a strong safety net in place to support those vulnerable households and those in crisis. He advised of the current support in place, and the additional funding support that had been made available and how it would be distributed.

Councillor Shuttleworth in seconding the report advised of his support for the strategy and action plan which was particularly important at the current time. It provided the right balance with the current measures in place and moving forward in tackling poverty. He welcomed the consultation process to take place.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

12 North East Screen Industries Partnership

The Cabinet considered the report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration Economy and Growth that sought approval to contribute to the North East Screen Industries Partnership region-wide development programme, and implementation of the associated Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the BBC (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

13 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.

14 Tees Valley Energy Recovery Facility Local Authority Special Purpose Vehicle (Key Decision: NCC/02/22)

The Cabinet considered the report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change to update Members on progress since Cabinet approval was gained on 8 July 2020 to participate in a joint procurement for a residual waste treatment solution, the Tees Valley Energy Recovery Facility (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.