

# DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Friday 17 June 2022 at 9.30 am**

**Present:**

**Councillor C Martin (Chair)**

**Members of the Committee:**

Councillors E Adam, A Batey, B Coult, R Crute, J Elmer, O Gunn, P Heaviside, C Hood, A Jackson, P Jopling, B Kellett, C Lines (Vice-Chair), R Manchester, C Marshall, B Moist, E Peeke, K Shaw, M Stead and A Surtees

## **1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Charlton-Lainé, J Charlton, I Cochrane, J Cosslett, L Hovvels, J Howey, L Maddison and M Wilson

## **2 Substitute Members**

Councillor B Kellett for L Hovvels and Councillor E Peeke for J Howey

## **3 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 March 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

## **4 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **5 Council Plan 2022-2026**

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources that considered the draft updated Council Plan, covering the period 2022-2026 before it was submitted for consideration and approval by Full Council in June 2022 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager advised that the Vision for County Durham 2035 was developed together with partner organisations and the public and set out what we would like the county to look like in 15 years'

time. The Vision for County Durham was structured around three ambitions, namely:

- (i) More and better jobs
- (ii) People live long and independent lives
- (iii) Communities are well connected and supportive of each other

The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager informed the Board that the refreshed Council Plan 2022 – 2026 has been structured around five objectives, capturing the three ambitions in the Vision for County Durham:

- (i) Our economy – capturing the more and better jobs ambition
- (ii) Our people – capturing the long and independent lives ambition
- (iii) Our communities – capturing the connected communities ambition
- (iv) Our environment – capturing the council's priorities around the climate emergency and our zero carbon ambitions
- (v) Our council – capturing corporate ambitions

Councillor Marshall enquired as to how performance management was fed into the plan and how we held people to account. He did not feel that the council articulated what success would look like so that communities could understand. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager assured the Board that performance indicators were crucial, that they could be quantified and had ambitious targets set against them. Members were involved via the various committees.

Councillor Crute asked how effectively we promoted the Council. For example, the re-purposing of the DLI had not mentioned actively the new History Centre at Mount Oswald's which would bring together for the first time the collections and County Record Office. He would have expected to see something in the foreword of the Council Plan. He said that we should be honest about what the DLI will be and where the collection will be available. He asked that a verbal update be given at Council so that we could promote every aspect of what was happening and how proud we were of it. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager confirmed that the plan would be approved at full Council and would be subject to any amendments. The History Centre would be included in the new plan from September onwards.

Councillor Elmer said how important it would be for the council to build upon its cultural offer especially for the economy, and he also welcomed the inclusion of the ecological emergency. He asked for a more explicit explanation going forward in terms of carbon measurements and emissions.

Councillor Surtees asked for some clarity around the equality objectives and where the policy around it would sit in relation to the Council Plan. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager explained that it was integrated into the overall objectives framework. Reference was made to the equality

policy within the plan but it was not duplicated. He would add a link in the Council Plan to that particular policy.

Councillor Gunn said that there were wider issues for the County and not just Durham City in terms of the City for Culture work. There were a number of larger towns across the County but she asked that the smaller towns and villages, which were steeped in culture and heritage, were also included in any plans. She added that the recent events for the Jubilee showed how proud residents were.

Councillor Gunn suggested that with regards to performance indicators, what success looks like could be underlined. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager agreed that he could build upon that for high level performance indicators and involve scrutiny.

**Resolved:**

That the content of the draft Council Plan 2022 – 2026 be noted.

## **6 Poverty Strategy and Action Plan**

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources that provided an update on the work of the Poverty Action and Strategy Plan to ensure there was a coherent and co-ordinated strategic approach, both within the council and across our partners to address poverty across County Durham. The Board were also asked to note the approval Cabinet gave to consult on a revised County Durham Poverty Action Plan which set out a comprehensive response to the impacts of the wide-ranging poverty issues within the county (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Transactional and Customer Services informed the Board that since the previous update in December 2021 an action plan was developed to underpin the key objectives:-

Objective 1: Use intelligence and data to target support to low-income households

Objective 2: Reduce the financial pressures on people facing or in poverty

Objective 3: Increase individual, household and community resilience to poverty

Objective 4: Reduce barriers to accessing services for those experiencing financial insecurity

She further advised that a consultation was underway with all key partners, including the 14 Area Action Partnerships and feedback would come back to committee following the conclusion of the consultation.

Councillor Jopling expressed her concerns regarding the take up of free school meals as for some children this could be their only hot meal of the day. With the increase in the cost of living this would only get worse. She asked how we reached those people and how we could find those families to offer help and support. The Head of Transactional and Customer Services advised that a separate Child Poverty Action Plan would be addressing those points in more detail with Public Health picking up that are of work. She agreed that we needed to break down the barriers around the stigma and reason not to chose free school meals. A working group had been set up which would look at this in detail.

Councillor Batey asked for more frequent reports back to this board as it was an evolving situation which would only get worse. She referred to young people accessing transport to rural areas for school. With the ever increasing costs in fuel she asked if any alternatives were being looked at to ensure these children in rural areas could get to school as not all families could afford their own transport or taxi fares. The Head of Transactional and Customer Services would ensure regular reporting and advised that there was an annual review for school transport which would go to Cabinet around November.

Councillor Elmer said that as a resident the effort and signposting was a positive one. He was also concerned around the stigma of taking up free school meals. He went on to express his concerns about house building and planning major developments, all of which were pushing costs of energy up. The Head of Transactional and Customer Services noted the comments.

Regarding Child Poverty, Councillor Gunn believed that the situation was only going to get worse and stressed the importance of consulting with the key people. Paragraph 54 of the report referred to a school representative on the partnership and she added that schools were the key regarding the consultation. They understood the child, the family and were doing work to address child poverty. The Head of Transactional and Customer Services took on board those comments and said that the Child Poverty Action Plan would be reported to Cabinet. She would pull the two plans together to give an overarching picture and would give clarity on what was trying to be achieved. The Child Poverty Action Plan was undergoing a separate consultation which would include schools.

Touching on a point made earlier in the meeting, Councillor Coult asked how we ensured we reached those people that were vulnerable, especially those who did not leave the house to visit the library or GP surgeries. The Head of

Transactional and Customer Services welcomed an ideas on how to reach those people. There had been a recent refresh of the leaflet and commented that bus shelter campaigns has worked well.

Councillor Peeke commented that school staff would know who these vulnerable families were.

Councillor Jackson also commented that the school would also be missing out on the free school meal precept. He also suggested that leisure centres would be a good place to place the leaflets. The Head of Transactional and Customer Services replied that the pupil premium for schools was an area that would be looked at as part of the working groups remit.

Councillor Adam referred to the number of low paid/low skilled jobs within the County with many families on lower than minimum wage. He asked what could be done in the area to attract highly paid workers in highly skilled jobs with training in place for young people. He believed this was a key area to tackle in line with the Economic Strategy. The Head of Transactional and Customer Services would feedback with those comments.

Councillor Hood commented that the press report an increase in demand for public transport for people travelling to work and asked if long journey times were having a detrimental effect on people if they were choosing to use public transport to get to work and education. The Head of Transactional and Customer Services reported that work was ongoing with colleagues in Regeneration Economy and Growth around this.

Referring to transport Councillor Marshall said that this was huge issue as well as broadband connections. He was aware that some people in the county did not go out to leisure centres, GP surgeries or schools and as referenced earlier in the meeting this needed addressing. Since austerity in 2010 this had caused a barrier for some families and removed opportunities for them to engage. He had not met anyone who wanted to be poor, with no home, no job and no means to feed themselves or their family. The resources of the County had suffered due to Brexit and had we remained in the EU, he believed we would have continued to receive funding. He felt very passionately about tackling the resource issue and asked that the Board write to government explicitly about the poverty in County Durham and the tax system disadvantages faced by the residents. The Head of Transactional and Customer Services said that it was important to discuss how we tackled resources effectively. Colleagues in housing and crisis teams were working together to look at the wider issues both internally and with partners. She also reported that there were groups held within the LGA and DWP as to how support future development.

Going back to the take up of free school meals Councillor Surtees was concerned about those families who did not qualify but were in work poverty, due to years of austerity and who were now cash poor. These families did not qualify for benefits and she asked what could be done for those people. Councillor Surtees also believed that there should be an HR implication for this report. The Head of Transactional and Customer Services said that Area Action Partnership discussions had found that some families that usually managed OK had suffered during COVID and furlough schemes. The aim was to help those families either in terms of financial support but also with mental health and wellbeing. She advised that Household Support Funding goes direct to schools where they can help to identify and support families.

Councillor Gunn said that local voluntary agencies were invaluable and often knew how to reach vulnerable people. She stressed that schools did a fantastic job in dealing with free school meal uptake and added that universal credit had also had an impact on these families. The Head of Transactional and Customer Services advised that discussions were ongoing with the DWP in relation to universal credit.

In relation to funding Councillor Crute said that it was available but that it was important to ensure it got to where it was most required but this needed political will. He suggested that the eligibility for free school meals should be extended to every child which would in turn boost pupil premiums and would feed into the local economy. He recommended that contact be made with the government office to relay all of the points made here and that this was having an adverse impact in the County.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised that scrutiny committees could write to the Secretary of State or could be presented to full Council as a motion.

Councillor Crute asked that all issues raised be collated, that the Secretary of State be contacted by letter and that this should be raised at full Council in July. Councillor Batey seconded that.

**Resolved:**

- (i) That the contents of this report and the revised Poverty Strategy and Action Plan for wider consultation and engagement with partners and stakeholders be noted;
- (ii) That a further report would be brought back to Cabinet following that consultation to update the Poverty Strategy and Supporting Action Plan in line with that feedback, be noted; and
- (iii) That a letter be sent to the Secretary of State giving feedback.

## **7 Medium Term Financial Plan(13), 2023/24 - 2026/27 Scrutiny Role in Development of Savings Options**

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources that provided an update on the development of the 2023/24 budget and the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP(13)), the consultation process with Corporate Overview Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) and role for thematic scrutiny committees to consider options for efficiency savings and income generation opportunities in their service areas to support the budget (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services delivered a presentation which highlighted the following:-

### **Development of MTFP(13)**

- The initial MTFP(13) forecasts will be presented to Cabinet on 13 July 2022
- MTFP(13) will cover the four year period 2023/24 to 2026/27
- The forecast savings shortfall is expected to increase significantly from the forecasts include in MTFP12 due to the impact of inflationary impacts upon the council's budget and continued demographic pressures in Children's Services
- Savings options need to be developed over the coming months to ensure the council can set a balanced budget for 2023/24 if, as expected, there is insufficient resources generated from council tax and government grant increases to meet the unavoidable cost pressures we will face
- It is hoped that additional funding will be provided to the sector by Central Government but it is expected that this will not be clarified until the draft local government financial settlement is received in December 2022

### **Scrutiny Role in Development of MTFP(13)**

- Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board will continue to have a strategic overview of the whole MTFP(13) process
- It is recommended however that thematic scrutiny committees consider options for efficiency savings and/or opportunities for generating additional income within their thematic service areas
- This will provide the opportunity for thematic scrutiny committees to play an important role in the development of the MTFP(13) and help to attain a broader understanding of the services within their remit
- Any proposals put forward by thematic scrutiny committees will be considered by Cabinet for inclusion in MTFP(13) to assist in balancing budgets for 2023/24 and beyond

### **Proposed Process to Developing Savings Options**

- Thematic scrutiny committees receive quarterly reports on budgetary control and service performance – this is a rich source of data
- In discussions during finance briefings with Members previously there has been a wide range of potential opportunities for efficiencies and income generation discussed
- The proposed process will provide an opportunity for these options to be considered and tested further
- Thematic scrutiny committees may wish to set up Task and Finish groups to consider options for savings
- The Task and Finish Groups may wish to produce a range of high level options they would wish to consider Cabinet to consider or may wish to carry out some of their own research into a small number of areas utilising resource from service areas and finance to support such work
- If significant work is generated by the process consideration may need to be given to reprioritising other planned scrutiny work to ensure that support teams have the capacity to meet all requirements

### **Timeframes**

- It must be recognised that any detailed research into specific budget areas may take a number of months and would be unlikely to identify savings to support the 2023/24 budget setting process
- At the same time savings options could be identified to support future years' budgets
- If higher level options are submitted to Cabinet for consideration for the development of the 2023/24 budget they would be required by the end of November 2022
- Thematic scrutiny committees are requested to limit the number of budget areas to be looked at in detail as it must be recognised that this work would be a major drain on services whilst they are developing broader savings plans

Before opening up to questions the Chair reminded Members that this was about the scrutiny process into the MTFP and not a discussion about the MTFP.

Councillor Crute queried the level of input as Cabinet made the decisions and scrutiny were now asking to identify areas for cuts. He asked for caution when looking at efficiency savings by thematic scrutiny committees. The Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services re-iterated his point that scrutiny committees would not be looking at cuts or the Councils priorities but it was about more efficient savings and raising extra income. Councillor Crute said that it was the way this would be perceived as there was no difference in terms of cuts and efficiency savings. The Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services replied that this was about looking at income regeneration and efficiency savings and providing the opportunity for this to be considered by each thematic scrutiny committee.

The Chair advised that it would be for each thematic committee on how to deal with this through their own work programme.

Councillor Stead believed that this was an opportunity to press for more money and investment opportunities and that we should be more ambitious. Housing problems in County Durham persisted and selling off land to housing developers needed to be looked at. The Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services advised that any income generated through property and land would be a capital receipt. The Council's own housing company Chapter Homes provided reports to Cabinet on their developments. Should a scrutiny committee want to explore in more detail about housing then this would be an option.

Councillor Jopling said that she would not be looking for cuts but for waste and the regeneration of money and trying to generate more income by selling our services. The Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services agreed that the Council do sell services but needed to be mindful of stretching the current cohort of staff.

Councillor Marshall commented that this was a public service not a business and that we should ensure that everything we do has a benefit to the public we served, not just about making money. He said that saving money meant cutting services and queried why this was on the agenda. He asked if Cabinet members would be invited to the thematic scrutiny meetings to advise on what realistically could be looked at. He thought that it was important to hear direct from the Cabinet portfolio holder. He urged caution that scrutiny were not responsible for setting policy and budget cuts.

Councillor Stead seconded Councillor Marshall's suggestion to invite Cabinet portfolio holders to the meetings.

The Chair clarified that it would be up to each thematic scrutiny committee on how to proceed.

Councillor Jackson said that this report was inviting councillors to have more say and input and should not be seen in a negative light. It was about looking at the financial implications and each committee would have their own ideas based on their work programme to look at opportunities.

Councillor Shaw could not see why scrutiny should be accountable for any cuts and that he was not here to act as Cabinet and therefore could not support this report.

Councillor Crute said that care would be required if each thematic committee were dealing with this in their own way. He believed that the scrutiny function was to scrutinise decisions made by Cabinet. At least by inviting

Cabinet portfolio holders members would hear directly about that service area and the intentions around efficiencies.

The Chair again reiterated his point that it would be up to each thematic scrutiny committee on how to proceed and who to involve.

Councillor Crute said that if the decisions had been passed to scrutiny then this should be followed through and any decisions made should be set by a clear process.

The Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services clarified that if consideration of service cuts were not to be part of any discussions but this did provide an opportunity to identify efficiency and income options. As a result there could be savings identified or a greater understanding as to how things worked. There could be a small number of focused pieces of work and an opportunity for discussions about efficiencies or areas of interest.

As chair of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee Councillor Coult said that this was an opportunity to have a greater input and thanked the chair for not dictating how each committee should deal with it. She said that this would have an impact on the work programme and was an opportunity for a positive step.

Councillor Moist found the move a positive one and could not see the need to formalise it. He added that decisions would still be made by Cabinet and officers would still produce the reports. He saw this as a scrutiny exercise that would give some recommendations, where, possible, and give an opportunity to look at certain areas. As Chair of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee he looked forward to the portfolio holder attending those meetings.

Councillor Batey was struggling to understand this way forward as it was Cabinet who made decisions on efficiency savings. She commented that portfolio holders rarely attended scrutiny meetings and she was concerned that this would overload the work programme. She went on to say that this process should already be happening with officers providing detailed reports and scrutiny having the opportunity to raise any concerns. Councillor Batey said that she would not want to step on the toes of Cabinet and could not see the point in formalising this.

Councillor Gunn agreed with Councillor Batey in that scrutiny had always had the opportunity to look at this. She felt very uncomfortable with this report and recommendations as believed that the public would see efficiency savings as cuts.

Councillor Jopling said that this would allow a more open door approach with Cabinet and the decision was for each chair of the thematic scrutiny committees to agree to.

Councillor Moist added that this was an exciting opportunity for scrutiny and he did not envisage any extra work, just a different way of working.

Councillor Adam commented that this gave an opportunity for individual members to have a view on how things could be done slightly differently. He was dubious as to how £30 million of efficiency savings would be met and said that some ground rules should be set as each scrutiny committee doing things differently would result in chaos.

The Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services clarified that it was up to chairs and vice chairs to be sensible at what to ask for and that financial staff would be attending each meeting. He added that discussions with the portfolio holder on specific areas would be helpful but it was not to question the portfolio holder on savings, as that was the role of Cabinet.

Councillor Surtees commented that she always had an open door whilst serving on the Cabinet. She added that scrutiny had always had an opportunity to suggest efficiency savings but it did not need to be formalised. She re-iterated the point made that it was not scrutiny's role to make these decisions but to hold the Cabinet to account.

The Chair referred back to a recommendation from Councillor Marshall which was seconded by Councillor Stead on inviting Cabinet members to each thematic scrutiny committee.

Councillor Marshall said that it was important that Cabinet members engaged from the start and to share their views. He added that it would be helpful to have a question and answer session with them and hear their plans for income regeneration.

Upon taking a vote, 10 were in favour, 7 were against and there was 1 abstention. It was therefore agreed that Cabinet portfolio holders were invited to attend the thematic scrutiny committees.

**Resolved:**

- (i) That the ongoing overarching role of COSMB in reviewing and assessing the councils approach to the development of MTFP(13) be noted; and
- (ii) That the role for thematic scrutiny committees in developing options for efficiency savings or income generation opportunities which could contribute to closing the forecast £29.987 million savings shortfall across the MTFP(13) period be noted.

## **8 Refresh of the Work Programme 2022/23 for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board**

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided the updated work programme for 2022/2023 (for copy see file of minutes).

### **Resolved**

That the report be noted.

## **9 Durham County Council Headquarters Alternative Options Assessment**

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources that provided an opportunity to comment on Cabinet's report of 27 April 2022 on options for the location of the Council's Headquarters functions and use of its estate should the Council not occupy the Sands site in Durham City (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Chair reminded members that they could not make reference to any of the information contained in the Part B report to Cabinet.

The Head of Corporate Property and Land reported that Cabinet at its meeting in April considered a report setting out the disposal of the newly constructed building on the Sands site in Durham City. The report also contained options for an alternative Headquarters and office accommodation and considered strategic employment site proposals for Aykley Heads. Cabinet subsequently agreed to dispose of the newly constructed building at the Sands site in Durham City to Durham University Business School and agreed an alternative Headquarters and office accommodation option.

Referring to a recent online meeting, Councillor Kellett said that he had raised the question about the new County Hall being for sale or out for tender. With a buyer lined up he believed that it was always the intention to sell to the University. He asked why the Council had accepted the lowest price offer instead of going out to competitive tender. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised that tender was only one way in which to ensure best value. The Head of Corporate Property and Land added that prior to Cabinet's decision a land valuation had been carried out to determine the potential market value. It was found that this was significantly less than the capital receipt the Council would receive from the University.

The Chair noted Councillor Kellett's objections.

Councillor Adam stated that he found it difficult as a scrutiny member to scrutinise the decision when all of the information was in Part B. He believed the detail to make comment when no information was publicly available.

Councillor Gunn said that the public were not aware of any actual costs involved in this decision and she found it frustrating that she was unable to answer any of their questions about it.

The Head of Legal and Democratic advised the Board that the report members were referring to was exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. She added that it was legitimate for the Council to protect its interests and that as we were in the middle of a contract discussion the risk analysis would impact on the Council's ability to deliver the project at best value. It was accepted practice for the information not to be public at this stage.

Councillor Marshall also commented that it was difficult to make any comments as there was no business case and no proposed costings. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services clarified that it was the view of the S151 officer, the Statutory Scrutiny Officer and the External Auditor, as well as her own as Monitoring Officer that the information remains in Part B at this stage.

Councillor Marshall commented that this was not what the public would expect and would be alarmed at the level of detail and risk. With proposals to occupy land at Aykley Heads he believed this would affect the opportunity to generate income on that site, putting public sector jobs where private sector jobs should be. He also believed that private business would not want to be on site next to Council staff and buildings. The opportunity for the Council to build on the current County Hall, making it into a Business Park would have afforded £1.7 million in business rates and an opportunity to change the economy. The Head of Corporate Property and Land advised that the report did recognise the importance of the site and as mentioned in earlier reports it was envisaged to offer alternative sites for development for the private sector. She added that the informal conference facilities were a dualled feature and were attractive to the market.

Councillor Marshall believed that taking up two plots on the Aykley Heads site had a detrimental impact to creating jobs in the area. The Head of Corporate Property and Land replied that Business Durham had advised that the type of businesses that were looking for premises were more of an industrial nature and so did not reflect the need to occupy office space at Aykley Heads.

Referring to the information contained in the Part B report, Councillor Hood asked when this information could be shared. The Head of Legal and

Democratic Services advised that this would depend on the facts. In some instances the exemptions may be lifted as we went through the process. This would be reviewed on a case by case basis.

Councillor Hood responded that whatever could come out in the public domain would at the appropriate time. His response to his residents would be that the Council was looking for the best deal and in order to do that only some information could be shared.

Referring to paragraph 10 of the report 'Scrutiny's role is to scrutinise decisions of the executive, to hold them to account and make recommendations on policy development and implementation', Councillor Batey said that she could not consider the report when she did not have the detail to do so, and added that she did not feel that this was an open and transparent report.

Councillor Martin had offered the opportunity of a question and answer session with the Board members.

Councillor J Elmer left the meeting at 12.20 pm

Councillor Jopling had not agreed to the previous decision to place the new County Hall at the Sands and felt that the sale to the University would benefit Durham's students. She added that she did not see the problem in relocating the Council offices to Aykley Heads.

With regards to the new ways of working Councillor Jackson said that it was not unfair or unreasonable to review that and should be suitable for all of our needs. He believed that to disclose any exempt information at this stage would be premature and reckless and agreed that the information would be disclosed at the appropriate time. He added that Aykley Heads was not the only site in County Durham that could offer potential development and investment.

The Head of Corporate Property and Land reported that she had looked at the office market and the impact of new ways of working throughout COVID and developed a strategy that was fit for future purpose. She concluded that the Cabinet report showed an alternate strategy which would not have a detrimental impact on Aykley Heads and any impact would be mitigated. She added that the report gave a lot of information on the methodology used. A lot of sites were visited and research was carried out, paragraph 41 of the Cabinet report showed the methodology assessment.

Councillor Peeke noted that the Council were extremely fortunate to sell the building at a profit.

Councillor Marshall left the meeting at 12.30 pm

Councillor Surtees commented that there was an ample supply of good properties and strategic priority sites. She was concerned about the potential rise in homes of multiple occupation if the student numbers increased.

Councillor Peeke left the meeting at 12.35 pm

Councillor Batey asked how she could perform the role on the Management Board in future when information was not available. She also commented that the move back to four council buildings was a step backwards from becoming a unitary when everyone came under one umbrella building.

Councillor Kellett left the meeting at 12.40 pm

Councillor Gunn could not understand why it was an issue for the Council to occupy prime land in the City, as it was not considered so for the University.

The Chair clarified that the Board could not control what decisions Cabinet made and that only certain sections of that report were available for comment by this Board. He agreed that officers had given sound reasons for certain information not being available at this time.

**Resolved:**

That comments on the outcome of the options appraisal report considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 27 April 2022 be noted.

**10 Request for Call-in - Durham County Council Headquarters  
Alternative Options Assessment**

The Board considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services that advised of a request for call-in of a cabinet decision, and of the decision made by the Chair of the Board not to call-in the decision (for copy see file of Minutes).

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

**11 Notice of Key Decisions**

The Board considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which listed key decisions which were scheduled to be considered by the Executive (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised that new to the plan were the following:

- Pathways Positive Journeys Future Direction
- Levelling Up Round 2
- City of Culture Governance

**Resolved:**

That the content of the report be noted.