

Electoral division(s) affected:

All

Purpose of the Report

To provide information to the Council on issues considered by the Cabinet at its meeting held on 18 January 2023 to enable Members to ask related questions by no later than midday 3 working days before the day of the meeting

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Item 7 - Mainstream Primary and Secondary Formula Funding 2023/24

1. Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 to 2026/27 and Revenue Budget 2023/24 - Key Decision: CORP/R/22/01 - Cabinet Portfolio Holder - Councillor Richard Bell, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided an update on the development of MTFP(13), covering the period 2023/24 to 2026/27 and on the development of the 2023/24 revenue budget in the light of the Chancellor of the Exchequer’s Autumn Statement in November and the provisional local government finance settlement published on 19 December 2022.

The report included updated financial forecasts, building on the figures previously considered by Cabinet in October 2022, together with the outcome of the MTFP(13) budget consultation process.

Decision

We

- (a) noted the content of the report detailing the content of the Autumn Statement and the provisional local government finance settlement;
- (b) noted that the draft settlement was better than was forecast but that the government had announced that funding settlements for the public sector but especially for unprotected government departments would be challenging for the period 2025/26 to 2027/28;
- (c) noted that proposals for how the additional allocation of £1.440 million from the Council Tax Support fund funding could be used and administered to enhance the current LCTRS would be included as part of the MTFP report to Cabinet in February 2023;
- (d) noted the changes to the MTFP(13) planning assumptions set out in the report, including the proposed council tax increases in line with the government's expectations;
- (e) noted the proposed revisions to savings plans for MTFP(13);
- (f) agreed the transfers of reserves recommended as part of the reserves review;
- (g) noted the budget shortfall for 2023/24 of £12.881 million with a £22.430 million savings shortfall over the four year MTFP(13) period;
- (h) noted the consultation responses on MTFP(13) and consider these when finalising the 2023/24 budget; and
- (i) noted that the 2023/34 revenue and capital budget and MTFP(13) 2023/24 to 2026/27 budget report would be presented to Cabinet on 8 February 2023 and to Council on 22 February 2023.

2. Bus Service Improvement Plan and Enhanced Partnership - Key Decision: REG/01/2023 - Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Elizabeth Scott, Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which outlined provided an update on the region's Bus Service Improvement Plan and Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme, provided detail on the required statutory consultation, and sought approval to formally sign the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme.

Decision

We

- (a) noted the contents of the report and appendices;
- (b) noted the workstreams for Durham, a summary of which was at paragraph 17, full details being in the EP Scheme appendix 3;

- (c) agreed that Durham County Council could act as signatory to the EP Plan and Scheme, and agreed delegated authority for the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth, in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships, to sign the document on behalf of the County Council;
- (d) agreed delegated authority for the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth, in consultation with Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships, to make amendments to the EP Plan and Scheme and associated funding between schemes.

3. North East Devolution – Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Amanda Hopgood, Leader of the Council

In accordance with paragraph 19(a) of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, North East Devolution was exempt from the call-in procedure due to the urgent nature of the decision being made.

We considered a report of the Chief Executive which provided a summary of the discussions with Government and the LA6 Councils relating to devolution in County Durham and information relating the opportunities and impact of a devolution deal on County Durham. This covered consideration of a County devolution deal option and also a devolution deal for the North East Region covering Durham, Gateshead, Northumberland, North Tyneside, Newcastle, South Tyneside and Sunderland local authority areas.

The report also provided details of the ‘minded to’ deal that had been announced by the Secretary of State and explained the legislative process that underpinned the delivery of the LA7 deal, including a Governance Review, Governance Scheme and consultation.

Decision

We:

- (a) agreed that the ‘minded to’ LA7 devolution deal represented the best option for County Durham residents and businesses;
- (b) endorsed in principle the “minded to” devolution deal at Appendix 3;
- (c) agreed with the findings of the governance review at Appendix 4, namely that the proposed creation of a new mayoral combined authority for the North East region to replace the existing combined authorities would improve the exercise of statutory functions across the region;
- (d) agreed that the North East Councils publish a scheme for the delivery of these governance changes, the current draft at Appendix 5;
- (e) agreed that the North East Councils undertake public consultation in connection with the proposals contained in the scheme as described in paragraphs 86 to 89 of the report;

- (f) agreed that the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of Council, be authorised to take all steps necessary to implement the above proposals, including (but not limited to) making amendments to the draft scheme and the consultation exercise;
- (g) noted that a further report would be brought to Cabinet at the end of that consultation exercise

4. Future of County Council Allotments – Cabinet Portfolio Holder - Councillor Rowlandson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Resources, Investment and Assets

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which sought approval to consider a range of allotment policy and procedure changes, building on work and recommendations from the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (ESCOSC) in January 2020 and which provided updated countywide policy and tenancy agreements for consideration, setting out transition arrangements which ensured that these measures were focussed on genuine allotments only, allotment associations were encouraged and empowered and that tenants had adequate time to make adjustments if this was required. The report also provided an update on the Durham County Council allotment service including recent investments, which complemented the above changes and re-invigorated service provision

Decision

We agreed to formal acceptance of ESCOSC policy recommendations, that would result in updated policy and tenancy agreements (Appendices 3 & 4)

We noted:

- (a) that safeguards were included which would:
 - (i) exclude those sites, which although managed by the allotment service were currently used detailed in Appendix 7 for other purposes;
 - (ii) provide flexibility for Associations in consultation with the Council to come to bespoke arrangements for their site;
 - iii) provide a transition period for tenants set out in (Appendix 5);
- (b) that allotments held by higher tier authorities should transfer to lower tier authorities set up after 2009 and consistent with this engagement with Town and Parish Councils where this applied;
- (c) recent investments in allotments, and infrastructure capital grant scheme for which budgetary provision already existed.

5. Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers 2022-2024 – Cabinet Portfolio Holder - Councillor Ted Henderson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People’s Services

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People’s Services which provided an Executive Summary in relation to the new Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Children Looked After and Care Leavers 2022-24 (Appendix 2 of the report).

The Strategy outlined the sufficiency position at a point in time, providing local intelligence and data and identified a series of key priorities and actions which would improve the council’s overall sufficiency of placement provision for children and young people who could no longer live with their family.

Decision

We considered and approved the Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers set out in Appendix 2 and the strategic priorities contained within Appendix 3.

6. Acquisition of property for use as Children’s Homes Cabinet Portfolio Holders - Councillor James Rowlandson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Resources, Investment and Assets and Councillor Ted Henderson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People’s Services

We considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People’s Services and Corporate Director of Regeneration and Economic Growth regrading a revised approach to expedite the acquisition process and enable fair competition with other buyers when purchasing properties for use as children’s homes. The report also sought to increase the delegated authority to Officers for acquisition of property for use as children’s homes.

Decision

We

- (a) noted the contents of the report;
- (b) approved the revised approach to acquiring property for the purposes of purchasing children’s homes as attached at Appendix 3;
- (c) delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Economic Growth, in consultation with the Corporate Director of Resources as Section 151 Officer, the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Resources, Investments and Assets and the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance to approve the acquisition of property up to the value of £500,000 where the property was to be used as a children’s home only;

(d) agreed that as a rarity, the acquisition of new children's homes was deemed a priority so that teams involved in the process could expedite them.

7. Mainstream Primary and Secondary Formula Funding 2023/24 – Cabinet Portfolio Holders - Councillor Ted Henderson, Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources Councillor Richard Bell, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance

We considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services and Corporate Director of Resources which provided an overview of the forecast Dedicated Schools Grant School Block and proposed local formula for allocating funding to individual schools in 2023/24, where the proposal was that the council continued to align the local mainstream primary and secondary formula funding in 2023/24 with the National Funding Formula (NFF).

Decision

We agreed that in 2023/24 the local formula continue to be aligned to the National Funding Formula (as updated); and to the adjustment for basic need growth funding for Framwellgate Primary School; and

We noted that the formula factors would be finalised upon receipt of the finance settlement, with the detailed formula included in the MTFP(13) and 2023/24 budget report in February 2023.

Background Papers

Cabinet Agenda and Reports

[Cabinet - Wednesday 18 January 2023](#)

Councillor A Hopgood,
Leader of the Council
14 February 2023