



Electoral division(s) affected:

All

Purpose of the Report

To provide information to the Council on issues considered by the Cabinet at its meetings held on 8 February and 15 March 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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8 February 2023

1. Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 to 2026/27 and Revenue and Capital 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 comprehensive financial information to enable Cabinet to agree the 2023/24 balanced revenue budget, an outline Medium Term Financial Plan MTFP(13) 2023/24 to 2026/27 and a fully funded capital programme to be recommended to Council on 22 February 2023.

Decision

We

(a) 2023/24 Revenue Budget

- (i) approved the identified base budget pressures included in Table 4;
- (ii) approved the Discretionary Rate Relief and Business Rates Hardship Relief Policy detailed in Appendix 2;
- (iii) approved the updated Council Tax Discretionary Discount and Hardship Relief Policy detailed in Appendix 3;
- (iv) approved the revised top up payments to Council Tax Reduction claimants left with a bill to pay to ensure full use of the Government's Council Tax Support Grant allocations to support vulnerable residents experiencing financial difficulty. This will mean making maximum payments of up to £110 for eligible Working Age Council Tax reduction claimants and up to £50 to eligible residents in receipt of Council Tax Reduction who are pensioners in 2023/24;
- (v) approved recommending the savings plans detailed in Appendix 5, which total £12.383 million in 2023/24, £2.225 million in 2024/25, £1.873 million in 2025/26 and £1.780 million in 2026/27 to Council on 22 February 2023;
- (vi) approved recommending a 2.99% 2023/24 Council Tax increase and a 2% increase which relates to the Adult Social Care precept, totalling a combined 4.99% overall increase in council tax to Council on 22 February 2023;
- (vii) approved the 2023/24 Net Budget Requirement of £519.973 million for consideration by Council on 22 February 2023.

(b) MTFP(13)

- (i) agreed the forecast MTFP(13) financial position, as set out at Appendix 8;
- (ii) set aside sufficient sums in Earmarked Reserves as are considered prudent. The Corporate Director of Resources should continue to be authorised to establish such reserves as required to review them for

both adequacy and purpose on a regular basis reporting appropriately to the Cabinet Portfolio Member for Finance and to Cabinet;

- (iii) aimed to maintain General Reserve in the medium term between 5% and 7.5% of the Net Budget Requirement which in cash terms is between £26 million and £39 million.

(c) Capital Budget

- (i) approved the revised 2022/23 Capital Budget of £165.074 million and the 2023/24 Capital Budget of £290.977 million;
- (ii) approved the Capital Strategy at Appendix 10;
- (iii) approved the additional capital schemes detailed at Appendix 11. These schemes will be financed from additional capital grants, from one off revenue funding, from capital receipts and from prudential borrowing;
- (iv) noted the option for the council to utilise capital receipts to finance severance costs utilising available flexibilities in this regard. The utilisation of such flexibility would require the approval of Cabinet;
- (v) approved the MTFP(13) Capital Budget of £778.294 million for 2022/23 to 2025/26 as detailed in Table 13.

(d) Savings Proposals

- (i) noted the approach taken by service groupings to achieve the required savings.

(e) Equality Impact Assessment

- (i) considered the identified equality impacts and mitigations;
- (ii) noted the programme of future work to ensure full impact assessments are included where appropriate at the point of decision once all necessary consultations have been complete.

(f) Pay Policy

- (i) approved the Pay Policy Statement at Appendix 13.

(g) Risk Assessment

- (i) noted the risks to be managed over the MTFP(13) period.

(h) Dedicated Schools Grant

- (i) noted the position on the Dedicated Schools Grant;
- (ii) approved the local formula for schools set out in Table 15 and authorise the Corporate Director of Resources to approve any amendments required following review by the DfE.

(i) Prudential Code, Treasury Management and Property Investment

- (i) agreed the Prudential Indicators and Limits for 2023/24 – 2026/27 contained within Appendix 14 of the report, including the Authorised Limit Prudential Indicator;

- (ii) agreed the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement contained within Appendix 14 which sets out the council's policy on MRP;
- (iii) agreed the Treasury Management Strategy and the Treasury Prudential Indicators contained within Appendix 14
- (iv) agreed the Cash Investment Strategy 2023/24 contained in the Treasury Management Strategy (Appendix 14 including the detailed criteria;
- (v) approved the Property Investment Strategy at Appendix 15.

2. School Admission Arrangements Academic Year 2024/25 - Key Decision: CYPs/01/2023 - Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Ted Henderson, 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 asked Cabinet to consider and approve the proposed admission arrangements and oversubscription criteria for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for the 2024/25 academic year.

Decision

We

- (a) agreed that the proposed admission numbers as recommended in Appendix 2 for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools be approved;
- (b) agreed that the admission numbers advised by Governing Bodies of Voluntary Aided Schools and Academies be noted;
- (c) agreed that the admission arrangements in Appendix 3 be approved.

3. Council Plan 2023/24-2026/27 - Refresh – Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Amanda Hopgood, Leader of the Council

We considered a report of the Chief Executive regarding the draft refresh of the Council Plan covering the four-year period 2023-2027 before it was submitted for approval by Council.

Decision

We:

- (a) considered and agreed the content of the draft Council Plan 2023-2027 attached at Appendix 3.
- (b) agreed that the refreshed Council Plan be considered by Council on 22 February.
- (c) delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Resources in consultation with the Leader to make any further minor amends and

updates to the document as necessary before it was taken to Council for approval.

4. Developer Viability, Affordable Housing and Financial Contributions, Housing Needs, Design Code and Trees, Woodlands and Hedges Supplementary Planning Documents – Cabinet Portfolio Holder - Elizabeth Scott, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration and Partnerships

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which sought approval to commence consultation on the second draft of the Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document and the first draft of the Housing Needs, County Durham Design Code and Trees, Woodlands and Hedges Supplementary Planning Documents. All four documents supported the County Durham Plan, adopted in October 2020

Decision

We:

- (a) agreed the second draft of the Development Viability, Affordable Housing and Financial Contributions Supplementary Planning Page 430 Document (Appendix 2) for consultation 24 February to 11 April 2023;
- (b) agreed to delegate to the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration and Partnerships the power to make minor modifications and adopt the document following consultation (if significant changes were required then the SPD would need to return to Cabinet for adoption); and
- (c) agreed the first drafts of the Housing Needs (Appendix 4), County Durham Design Code (Appendix 5) and Trees, Woodlands and Hedges (Appendix 6) for consultation from 24 February to 11 April 2023.

5 Public Space Protection Order – Aggressive begging in Durham City – Cabinet Portfolio Holder - Councillor John Shuttleworth, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Rural Communities and Highways

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which provided the outcome of the consultation exercise which was carried out in relation to a potentially new PSPO for aggressive begging in Durham City and to made a recommendation in respect of the proposed next steps.

Decision

We:

- (a) noted the contents of the report that there was insufficient evidence to warrant a PSPO for aggressive or non-aggressive begging currently;
- (b) agreed for relevant teams and agencies to adopt a problem solving approach for matters that were occurring in the City as set out in the report.

6. Home to School Transport Services – Consultation - Cabinet Portfolio Holders - Councillor Ted Henderson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People’s Services, Councillor Richard Bell, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Councillor Elizabeth Scott, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration and Partnerships

We considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People’s Services, Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth and Corporate Director of Resources which sought approval to undertake a public consultation on proposals to transform Durham County Council’s Home to School Transport Service for Children and Young People.

Decision

We:

- (a) agreed that a public consultation would take place from 27 February 2023 to 9 April 2023 on the proposals outlined in relation to the transformation of the Home to School Transport Service;
- (b) agreed to delegate the sign off of the final consultation documentation to the Corporate Director of Children and Young Peoples Services in conjunction with the relevant Portfolio Holders.

15 March 2023

1. Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2022/23 – Period to 31 December 2022 and Update on Progress towards achieving MTFP(12) savings- 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 the updated forecast revenue and capital outturn for 2022/23, based on the position to 31 December 2022. the dedicated schools grant and updated forecast schools position as at 31 March 2023, based on the position to 31 December 2022, the updated forecast for the council tax and business rates collection fund position at 31 March 2023, based on the position to 31 December 2022 and details of the updated forecast use of and contributions

to earmarked, cash limit and general reserves in 2022/23 and the estimated balances that would be held at 31 March 2023.

The report also sought approval of the revised capital programme 2022/23, other budget adjustments and proposed sums treated as outside of the cash limit in year and provided an update on progress towards achieving MTFP(12) savings in 2022/23.

Decision

We

- (a) noted the council's overall forecast financial position for 2022/23 and the continuing uncertainty associated with the outturn forecast resulting from the significant inflationary cost pressures and ongoing Covid-19 impacts on income as set out in the report;
- (b) agreed the proposed 'sums outside the cash limit' and transfers to and from general contingencies as set out in the report;
- (c) agreed the revenue and capital budget adjustments outlined in the report;
- (d) noted performance against the various prudential indicators agreed by Council in February 2022;
- (e) note the forecast use of earmarked reserves in year;
- (f) noted the forecast end of year position for the cash limit and general reserves;
- (g) noted the inflationary pressures which are forecast to be managed from the Budget Support Reserve and from the General Reserve;
- (h) noted the need to review the general reserve balance during final outturn, with consideration to be given to replenishing the general reserve to the minimum level agreed by Council on 22 February 2023 via a transfer from the MTFP Support Reserve;
- (i) noted the Dedicated Schools Grant and Schools forecast outturn position;
- (j) noted the position on the capital programme and the Collection Funds in respect of Council Tax and Business Rates; and
- (k) noted the amount of savings delivered to 31 December 2022 against the 2022/23 targets and the total savings that will have been delivered since 2011.

2. Annual Review of the Constitution - Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Councillor Amanda Hopgood, Leader of the Council

We considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which present the proposed changes to the Council's Constitution as part of the annual review due to be considered by Council on 24 May 2023.

Decision

We

- (a) considered the proposed changes to the Constitution; and
- (b) approved the delegation of executive powers as set out in the proposed amendments to the officer scheme of delegation as set out at paragraphs 40 to 56 of the report.
- (c) recommended that Council agree the proposed amendments to the Council's Constitution at its meeting on 24 May 2023.

3. Providing a sustainable solution for Wellfield School – Cabinet Portfolio Holder - 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 Resources that described the current position of Wellfield school and detailed the steps taken since 2016 to prevent the school's significant deficit budget increasing further. The report set out the challenges the school was facing and the difficulty of current curriculum planning, whilst still being impeded by its historic financial position.

It was recommended that the Council write off the accumulated deficit of the school at the point of conversion to academy with New College Durham Academies Trust (NCDAT) Multi Academy Trust. This would support the Trust and school to secure the current good standard of educational provision for the communities the school served.

Decision

We agreed to writing off the accumulated deficit of Wellfield Community School at the point of academy conversion with NCDAT. This solution was needed to secure the school's sustainability, maintain its strong educational outcomes, and ensure the sufficiency of pupil places within its planning area.

4. County Durham Partnership Update – Cabinet Portfolio Holders - Councillor Amanda Hopgood, Leader of the Council Councillor and Elizabeth Scott, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships

We noted a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which provided an update on issues being addressed by the County Durham Partnership (CDP). The report also included updates on other key initiatives being carried out in partnership across the county.

Background Papers

Cabinet Agenda and Reports

[Cabinet - Wednesday 8 February 2023](#)

[Cabinet - Wednesday 15 March 2023](#)

Councillor A Hopgood,
Leader of the Council
21 March 2023