



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 11 October, 1 November and 15 November 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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11 October 2023

Item 1 - Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 – 2029 – Councillor Alan Shield, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Equality and Inclusion

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth sources which sought approval of the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, as set out at Appendix 2 of the report, for a seven week public consultation from 30 October 2023 to 18 December 2023.

Decision:

We:

- (a) approved the draft strategy;
- (b) agreed to a seven week public consultation from 30 October 2023 to 18 December 2023; and
- (c) noted that a final version of the strategy will be brought back to Cabinet in March 2024 for approval.

Item 2 - Medium Term Financial Plan(14) 2024/25 – 2027/28 – Councillor Richard Bell, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Councillor Amanda Hopgood, Leader of the Council [Key Decision: CORP/R/23/01]

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided an update on the development of the 2024/25 budget and the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP(14)) covering the period 2024/25 to 2027/28, including updated financial planning assumptions which had affected a number of the figures previously reported.

The report also included details of further savings proposals that could be implemented to help balance the budget, which would be subject to consultation over the coming two months, building on the consultation which was currently underway on the proposals contained in the report to Cabinet in July.

Decision:

We:

- (a) noted the updated MTFP forecasts and the requirement to identify additional savings of £67.602 million for the period 2024/25 to 2027/28, but also note that this forecast could change based upon outcome of future government funding settlements, the ongoing impact demand for services and inflationary pressures upon the council;
- (b) noted that at this stage a forecast £16.308 million of savings are required to balance the 2024/25 budget;
- (c) noted the revised profile and reduced quantum of the savings previously agreed as part of MTFP(13) as set out at Appendix 2;
- (d) noted the ongoing consultation on the new savings proposals agreed by Cabinet in July, which are set out at Appendix 3;
- (e) agreed that the new additional savings proposals included at Appendix 4 to support MTFP(14) are consulted on; and
- (f) noted that should the financial forecasts set out at Appendix 5 remain unaltered and the council tax increases and savings proposals at Appendix 2 to 4 are agreed at County Council on 28 February 2024 then the budget deficit would be reduced to £8.308 million in 024/25, with a budget deficit of £52.272 million across the full MTFP(14) planning period.

Item 3 - Director of Public Health Annual Report 2023 – Councillor Chris Hood, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Adult and Health Services

We received the 2023 Annual Report of the Director of Public Health for County Durham.

Decision:

We:

- (a) received the Director of Public Health Annual Report 2023;
- (b) agreed to publish the annual report.

Item 4 - County Durham Design Code, Trees, Woodlands and Hedges, Shop Fronts and Energy Efficiency, Renewables and the Historic Environment Supplementary Planning Documents – Councillor 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 County Durham Design Code and Trees, Woodlands and Hedges Supplementary Planning Documents and the first draft of the Shop Fronts and Energy Efficiency, Renewables and the Historic Environment Supplementary Planning Documents. All four documents supported the County Durham Plan, adopted in October 2020.

Decision:

We:

- (a) agreed the second draft of the County Durham Design Code at Appendix 2 and Trees, Woodlands and Hedges at Appendix Supplementary Planning Documents for consultation 23 October to 3 December 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 documents following consultation (if significant changes are required then the SPD would need to return to Cabinet for adoption); and
- (c) agreed the first drafts of the Shop Fronts at Appendix 4 and Energy Efficiency, Renewables and the Historic Environment Supplementary Planning Documents at Appendix 5 for consultation from 23 October to 3 December 2023.

**Item 5 - Climate Emergency Response Plan 2 – 2022/23 Update –
Councillor Mark Wilkes, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods
and Climate Change**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which provided an update on progress of the Climate Emergency Response Plan (CERP2) and considered opportunities for future iterations of this plan, including an extension of span to three years taking the Council and countywide carbon reduction actions to 2027.

Decision:

We:

- (a) noted the significant progress made against delivering during year one of the Climate Change Emergency Response Plan 2
- (b) agreed the proposed adjustments to CERP3 currently in preparation.
- (c) noted that whilst significant progress had been made, opportunities and challenges lay ahead, and guided by future CERPs, this would require resource consideration as part of the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

Item 6 - Culture Reserve – Councillor Elizabeth Scott, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration and Partnerships

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which highlighted the activity following County Durham's bid for UK City of Culture 2025 and outlined a 2024-2026 high level cultural development programme and associated funding sources.

Decision:

We:

- (a) noted the progress of the bid and subsequent activity;
- (b) approved the use of the £2m culture reserve to contribute to the Programme as set out in paragraphs 55-66 of the report;
- (c) delegated authority for the Corporate Director of Regeneration Economy & Growth in consultation with the portfolio holder for Economy & Partnerships to approve the detailed programme in respect of the councils funding;
- (d) would receive a final evaluation report following the conclusion of the programme in 2026/27.

1 November 2023

Item 1 – North East Devolution – Councillor Amanda Hopgood, Leader of the Council

We considered a report of the Chief Executive which sought consent to the making of the statutory order to abolish the existing combined authorities in the region (i.e. NECA and NTCA) and replace them with a single mayoral combined authority which encompassed the areas of the seven councils, which is to be known legally as the North East Mayoral Combined Authority (NEMCA).

Decision:

We:

- (a) considered the content of the report;
- (b) agreed in principle that the Council should consent to the making of the order;
- (c) authorised the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to issue the Council's formal consent when requested by the Secretary of State;
- (d) authorised the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to finalise the terms of the side agreement regarding

- the support arrangements associated with these proposals; and
- (e) authorised the Chief Executive to take all other steps necessary to implement these proposals.

15 November 2023

Item 1 - Council Tax Base 2024/25 and Forecast Surplus / Deficit on the Council Tax Collection Fund [Key Decision: CORP/R/23/02] – Councillor Richard Bell, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which set out the outcomes of the consultation and equalities impact assessment (EIA) of the proposals to make changes to the Council Tax premiums for empty homes and to introduce Council Tax premiums for properties classed as second homes, which were linked to the achievement of savings targets included in MTFP (14) and (where relevant to 2024/25) included within the 2024/25 tax base calculations

The report sought to determine the council's tax base for domestic properties liable to pay council tax, which was an important component in the council's budget setting process for 2024/25 and to report on the estimated council tax collection fund surplus / deficit as at 31 March 2024.

The report also incorporated the outcomes of the consultation on the proposal to reduce the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) grant payments to Town and Parish Councils by 50%, phased in over the next two financial years, linked to the achievement of savings targets included in MTFP (14).

Decision:

We:

- (a) noted the consultation outcomes in terms of the Empty Property and Second Homes Premium changes and the updated financial modelling contained within the report regarding these changes;
- (b) agreed to increase the Council Tax premium for properties which have been classed as empty and unfurnished for 10 or more years to 300% from 1 April 2024;
- (c) agreed to reduce the amount of time a property needs to be classed as empty and unfurnished before an increased premium is applicable from the current time of 24 months to 12 months from 1 April 2024;
- (d) agreed that with effect from 1 April 2025, to introduce a Council Tax premium of 100% for those properties that are classed as 'second homes';
- (e) noted that the recommendations in terms of the Empty Property premium changes have been factored into the Tax Base setting

- calculations set out in the report;
- (f) noted the commitment to complete a review of both the current S13A policy and second homes to further understand the impact of these changes on the tax base;
 - (g) approved the council tax base for the financial year 2024/25 for the county, which has been calculated (incorporating consultation outcomes) to be 146,645.3 Band D equivalent properties;
 - (h) noted the outcome of the LCTRS Grant Reduction consultation and approve that these payments are reduced by £750,000 phased in over three years from 2024/25;
 - (i) noted the impact on individual Town and Parish council tax bases and the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Grant allocations for the financial year 2024/25; and
 - (j) noted the forecasted Council Tax Collection Fund position at 31 March 2024, which would be formally declared following the meeting.

Item 2 - Adoption of the Inclusive Economic Strategy Delivery Plan [Key Decision: REG/07/2023] - Councillor Elizabeth Scott, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which sought approval to adopt the County Durham Inclusive Economic Strategy (IES) Delivery Plan that had been developed through, and was owned by, the County Durham Economic Partnership (CDEP).

Decision:

We agreed to adopt the County Durham Inclusive Economic Strategy Delivery Plan presented in Appendix 2 to the report.

Item 3 - Local Heritage Listing Project: Outcomes and Governance Proposals for the Future Identification of Non-Designated Heritage Assets [Key Decision: REG/09/2023] - Councillor Elizabeth Scott, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which informed of the outcomes of a Local Heritage Listings Project, its legacy through the publication of local lists for eight pilot areas, the entry of data on to the Historic Environment Record, and the use of the findings going forward in the development management function. Governance proposals for the future identification of non-designated heritage assets and the implications associated with this designation were also outlined.

Decision:

We:

- (a) agreed to the publication of the local lists for the pilot areas as required by the S31 grant, with publicity to promote their launch in partnership with Historic England;
- (b) agreed to the development of appropriate internal governance arrangements for the further identification of NDHAs across the county, via the production of an SPD, to be the subject of a future report.

Item 4 – External Contractor Staff Suitability Policy [Key Decision: REG/06/2023] – Councillor Elizabeth Scott, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which advised of the outcomes of a consultation on the introduction of the policy which provided a clear process for anyone who wanted to apply for, or renew, their authorisation to be deployed in the provision of transport for children and vulnerable adults via an external contractor on behalf of the council.

Decision:

We:

- (a) noted the outcomes of the consultation; and
- (b) approved the adoption and publication of External Contractor Staff Suitability Policy.

Item 5 - Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2023/24 - Period to 30 September 2023 and Update on Progress towards achieving MTFP (13) savings – Councillor Richard Bell, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided the forecast revenue and capital outturn at 31 March 2024, based on the position to 30 September 2023, an update on the dedicated schools grants and forecast schools' outturn as at 31 March 2024, based upon the position to 30 September 2023, the forecast for the council tax and business rates collection fund outturn at 31 March 2024, based on the position to 30 September 2023 and details of the updated forecast use of and contributions to earmarked, cash limit and general reserves in 2023/24 and the estimated balances that would be held at 31 March 2024.

The report sought approval of the revised 2023/24 capital programme, other budget adjustments and proposed sums treated as outside of the cash limit in

year and provided an update on progress towards achieving MTFP (13) savings in 2023/24.

Decision:

We:

- (a) noted the council's overall forecast financial position for 2023/24 and the continuing uncertainty associated with the outturn forecast resulting from the significant inflationary and demand led cost pressures;
- (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 2023;
- (e) noted the forecast use of earmarked reserves in year;
- (f) noted the forecast 2023/24 cash limit underspend of £0.977 million (net of CYPS) alongside the forecast contribution of £3.258 million to General Reserves resulting in a forecast overall net council underspend in 2023/24 of £4.235 million;
- (g) noted the net unavoidable inflationary pressures which were forecast to be managed from the General Reserve;
- (h) noted that all reserves would be reviewed to ensure sufficient sums were available in the ERVR and MTFP Support Reserve to support the MTFP going forward;
- (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 30 September 2023 against the 2023/24 targets and the total savings that will have been delivered since 2011.

Item 6 - Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 Annual Review of the Council's use of powers – Councillor Richard Bell, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance

We considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which informed about the Council's use of its powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 ('RIPA') during the period of 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 and sought approval of the Council's Corporate RIPA Guidance, which had been subject to an annual review.

Decision:

We:

- (a) considered and noted the Council's use of RIPA during the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023;
- (b) approved the proposed changes to the Council's Corporate RIPA Guidance; and
- (c) approved the abridged RIPA policy document.

Item 7 - Single Homeless Accommodation Programme – Councillor James Rowlandson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Resources, Investment and Assets

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which provided an update on the Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP) and to sought approval for a funding bid submitted to Homes England (HE) and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), which required match funding, albeit on a self-financing basis.

The bid sought to provide accommodation and support as part of a proposal to assist rough sleepers and those at risk of sleeping rough and would secure three years of revenue funding also to fund specialist service provision.

Decision:

We approved funding on the following terms:

- (a) Homes England will provide £2,762,382 in capital resources from the SHAP for the provision of 32 bed spaces of supported accommodation;
- (b) the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities will provide £1,656,181 in revenue funding over three years for the provision of specialist support services for the clients housed by the programme;
- (b) the council will provide the remaining capital funding of £1,841,588 for the provision of 32 bed spaces of accommodation on a self-financing basis from the ongoing rental income; and
- (d) a suitably qualified specialist external support provider is procured through a competitive process to provide wrap around support to the clients housed by the programme; and
- (e) no extension of the wrap around support contract beyond three years will be agreed without a further report to Cabinet setting out how the revenue costs would be funded once the grant funding expires and / or options for repurposing these facilities.

Item 8 - Acquisition of Coach Lodge, Witton Gilbert and Copeland Barns, West Auckland – Councillor James Rowlandson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Resources, Investment and Assets and Ted Henderson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People

We considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth and the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services which sought agreement for the acquisition of two properties and associated amendments to the delegated authority of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth.

Decision

We approved the recommendations in the report.

Background Papers

Cabinet Agenda and Reports

[Cabinet Agenda and Papers - Wednesday 11 October 2023](#)

[Cabinet Agenda and Papers - Wednesday 1 November 2023](#)

[Cabinet Agenda and Papers - Wednesday 15 November 2023](#)

Councillor A Hopgood,
Leader of the Council
28 November 2023