

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Cabinet** held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Wednesday 17 April 2024 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor A Hoggood (Leader of the Council)

Cabinet Members:

Councillors R Bell (Deputy Leader of the Council), T Henderson, C Hood, S McDonnell, E Scott, A Shield, J Shuttleworth and M Wilkes

1 Public Questions

There were no public questions.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest in relation to any items of business on the agenda.

4 Annual Review of the Constitution

The Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer which presented the proposed changes to the Council's Constitution following the annual review process (for copy of report see file of minutes).

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services informed Cabinet that the process to review the Constitution was similar to the process undertaken in previous years. The report contained tracked changes to appendices to show the proposed changes. A summary of all the proposed changes was outlined in Appendix 15. Many changes were minor in nature. The more substantive changes related to the Audit Committee which included a revised set of terms of reference to reflect CIPFA guidance, and the addition of scrutiny of treasury management performance.

It was also proposed to make some substantial changes to Appendix A to the Finance Procedure Rules to reflect a number of changes in the Financial Management Standards.

The Leader of the Council highlighted that the Constitution set out how the Council operated. It was recognised as good practice to review the Constitution regularly. The report provided a summary of the work carried out throughout the year and contained a number of proposed changes to the Officer Scheme of Delegations to ensure that Council business continued to be conducted efficiently and effectively. The proposals would ensure governance arrangements remained fit for purpose and reflected best practice. The review had been subject to cross party input through the Constitution Working Group. The Leader placed on record her appreciation to the Monitoring Officer and her team, along with officers across the Council who had assisted in this piece of work.

Cllr R Bell, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance echoed the comments of the Leader of the Council and Seconded the report.

Resolved:

That Cabinet approve the delegation of executive powers as set out in the proposed amendments to the officer scheme of delegation at paragraphs 20 – 40 of the report and recommend that Council agree to the proposed revisions to the Constitution at its meeting on 22 May 2024.

5 Health Protection Assurance Annual Report

The Cabinet considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services and Director of Public Health to provide an update on the health protection assurance arrangements which was a multi-agency responsibility of health protection activities throughout County Durham over the course of the year (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Councillor C Hood, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Adult and Health Services outlined that it was a statutory function of the local authority to produce a Health Protection Assurance Annual Report. The Director of Public Health had provided Cabinet with details of the adequacy of prevention, surveillance, planning and response to reduce the harm from Health Protection issues that affected residents of County Durham. The report also identified areas of concern and risk mitigations and where further development and assurance would be required in the coming year.

The report demonstrated the strength of partnership relationships across the system including the UK Health Protection Agency, as well as DCC colleagues including environmental health, the Civil Contingencies Unit, local healthcare GP's, ICB Place and the Foundation Trusts. Councillor Hood was pleased that the report highlighted key developments throughout the year, including the MMR rapid review, the publication of the County Durham Sexual Health Strategy and the significant work carried out across partners to promote winter preparedness for services and wellness for residents, including the evolution of the Warm Spaces Network to Welcome Spaces. The concerns highlighted regarding the performance of the school age immunisation service and sexual health services were welcomed, together with the recommended actions to address these issues in improving health outcomes for the residents of County Durham.

Councillor T Henderson acknowledged the broad assurances and effective processes that were in place with each of the key elements of health protection. Councillor Henderson noted the sustained delivery and performance of the immunisation programme within the County, particularly in the 0–5 year age group which exceeded the national standard.

The Leader of the Council commented that the case studies demonstrated within the report showed how the Council worked in partnership and these were key to the success of what we do in County Durham.

Resolved:

That the report, assurance and actions be noted.

6 Durham County Council becoming signatories to the MIND Mental Health at Work Commitment

The Cabinet considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services, Corporate Director of Resources and Director of Public Health that provided an overview of the ongoing good work to improve mental health and wellbeing. The report also provided an overview of the Mental Health at work commitment and proposed that Durham County Council becomes a signatory to the commitment (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Councillor C Hood, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Adult and Health Services explained that improving mental health resilience and wellbeing was one of four priorities of the current Health and Wellbeing Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Good mental health was crucial to good overall health and wellbeing and poor mental health not only impacted on the person but families, friends, relationships, and the wider society.

Durham County Council recognises the importance of good workforce mental health and wellbeing. In 2018 the council became a signatory to the 'Time to Change' employer pledge which supported us to create a more open and understanding culture around mental health and tackle associated stigma. As an organisation the Council celebrated positive mental health by supporting annual campaigns which provided an opportunity to bring staff together to focus on the benefits of good mental health. The closure of the 'Time to Change' charity had resulted in the Council looking to the mind at mental health at work commitment as a structured approach to support and working to continually develop and improve approaches to make DCC a happy and healthy place to work. Mental Health at Work commitment is a national movement comprising a set of six standards and supporting actions. It would help assist the Council in supporting workplace mental health, increase confidence in dealing with issues. Councillor Hood highlighted that a stigma still presented people having open conversations about their own Mental Health and Wellbeing.

Councillor R Bell, Deputy Leader of the Council explained that the Council were aware of the impact that poor mental health could have on people and their work. As a signatory to the former 'Time to Change' pledge, Councillor Bell was pleased to see that the Council were looking to progress in this area of work to the Mind Mental Health at Work Commitment. This would add to the support the Council currently provided by way of the Employee Assistance Programme, Work on Wellbeing and the Wellbeing portal, ensuring that key actions were in place to achieve better mental health outcomes. As a member of the Health and Wellbeing Board, Councillor Bell was aware that mental health was a key public health priority. Signing the commitment would not only benefit staff, but also sent a clear message to the wider community that mental health was a key priority for the Council.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.