



**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 13 January, 17 April, 15 May and 4 June 2024 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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## **1. Spennymoor – Long Term Plan for Towns - Key Decision: REG/2024/002**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which provided an update on the Government's Long Term Plan for Towns programme which was announced in October 2023 and sought to target funding to 55 towns across England including Spennymoor.

The report included details of the further guidance received in December 2023 together with the proposals for developing a Town Board and the development of a town plan. In October 2023, the Government announced a £1.1 billion programme to assist with the regeneration of 55 towns across the United Kingdom (UK) through the new Long-Term Plan for Towns (LTPT) programme.

Spennymoor was identified as one of the beneficiaries of the programme and is set to access £20 million of government funding over the next 10 years.

### **Decision**

We endorsed the process of seeking a chair for the Town Board through open recruitment and delegated approval of the submission of the Vision and Town Investment Plan to the Corporate Director of Regeneration Economy and Growth in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holders for Economy and Partnerships and Resources, Investments and Assets.

## **2. Corporate Enforcement Policy - Key Decision: NCC/2024/001**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which sought approval to adopt the revised Corporate Enforcement Policy from 1 April 2024 following internal review and wider public and partner consultation. The report also sought approval to grant delegated authority to relevant Corporate Directors in consultation with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to review and amend the Corporate Enforcement Policy as appropriate as and when required in the future.

### **Decision**

We noted the contents of the report and the final Corporate Enforcement Policy which accompanied the report as Appendix 2.

We agreed to formally adopt the Corporate Enforcement Policy from 1 April 2024, subject to any further amendments and delegated authority to relevant Corporate Directors in consultation with the Head of Legal and Democratic

Services to review and amend the Corporate Enforcement Policy as appropriate as and when required.

### **3. Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2023/24 – Period to 31 December 2023 and Update on Progress towards achieving MTFP (13) savings**

We noted the following:

- a) 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) performance against the various prudential indicators agreed by Council in February 2023;
- c) the forecast use of earmarked reserves in year;
- d) the forecast 2023/24 cash limit underspend of £2.479 million (net of CYPS) alongside the forecast contribution of £4.336 million to general reserves resulting in a forecast overall net council underspend in 2023/24 of £6.815 million;
- e) the net unavoidable inflationary pressures which are forecast to be managed from the General Reserve;
- f) that all reserves will be reviewed to ensure sufficient sums are available in the ERVR and MTFP Support Reserve to support the MTFP going forward;
- g) the Dedicated Schools Grant and Schools forecast outturn position;
- h) the position on the capital programme and the Collection Funds in respect of Council Tax and Business Rates; and
- i) the amount of savings delivered to 31 December 2023 against the 2023/24 targets and the total savings that will have been delivered since 2011.

#### **Decision**

We agreed the proposed 'sums outside the cash limit' and transfers to and from general contingencies as set out in the report and approved the revenue and capital budget adjustments outlined in the report.

#### **4. Public Space Protection Order – Durham City**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhood and Climate Change which provided an overview of the powers, benefits and risks available under a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO). The report sought agreement to undertake a public consultation on the introduction of a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) to help control begging, urinating or defecating and the use of intoxicating substances. A further report will be presented for further consideration following the outcome of the consultation exercise to determine whether to introduce a PSPO in Durham City.

##### **Decision**

We agreed that a full public consultation exercise be undertaken to gather evidence relating to the activities and behaviours to determine the need for a PSPO in Durham City and gauge the level of public support and opinion on the merits of introducing a new PSPO in Durham City. We also agreed to seek views on whether any other behaviours and activities should be included in a PSPO for Durham City.

We agreed to delegate the finalisation of the consultation proposals and the management of the consultation process itself to the Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Rural Communities and Highways.

#### **5. New Business Units South Church Enterprise Park, Bishop Auckland**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which sought approval to progress the development of speculative business units on land owned by the Council at South Church Enterprise Park, Bishop Auckland, as part of the Stronger Towns Programme.

##### **Decision**

We agreed to progress the scheme of new business units, apply for all statutory approvals, and go out to competitive tender for a construction partner.

We also provided delegated authority to the Corporate Directors of Regeneration, Economy and Growth and Resources in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Investment and Assets, to enter into the construction contract should it be achievable within the Council funding envelope set out within the report.

## **6. Tree Management Policy and Inspections Review**

We considered proposed revisions to the corporate Tree Management Policy which sets out the approach to managing trees in the Council's ownership, or under its management, as well as trees in private ownership that pose a safety risk to the public. The policy has proved to be a useful document since its introduction in 2014, providing information to the public on tree-related matters and helping to provide a consistent approach to dealing with customer enquiries. It was programmed for review in July 2023 and that review has now been completed.

The amendments made do not fundamentally change many of the elements of the previous policy and particularly those dealing with service requests which were the focus of interest in the 2013 public consultation. The main changes have been made in the areas of tree risk management and tree inspection procedures.

### **Decision**

We noted the content of the report and endorsed the revised Tree Management Policy and proposed tree inspection procedures.

We also noted that a review of budgets and resources would be carried out to help ensure that safety works are adequately resourced and prioritised. Further reports are to be submitted to Neighbourhoods and Climate Change Management Team and Corporate Property Board outlining the results of the inspection regime and potential resource implications.

We agreed to an internal audit of the revised tree risk management strategy after 12 months of complete implementation.

## **7. Annual Review of the Constitution**

We considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which presented the Annual Review of the Constitution. The Council's Constitution sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made, and the procedures which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. Section 9P of the Local Government Act 2000 requires local authorities operating executive arrangements to prepare and keep up to date a document (their Constitution) which contains a copy of the authority's standing orders, a copy of the authority's code of conduct for its members and coopted members, such information as the Secretary of State may direct, and such other information (if any) as the authority considers appropriate. A table summarising the proposed changes was included at Appendix 15 to the report.

## **Decision**

We approved 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 recommended that Council agree to the proposed revisions to the Constitution at its meeting on 22 May 2024.

## **8. MIND Mental Health at Work Commitment**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services and the Director of Public Health in Durham County Council becoming signatories to the MIND Mental Health at Work Commitment. We recognise that good mental health is fundamental to functioning well, it enables individuals to cope with the normal stressors of life, work productively, maintain healthy relationships, actively participate in the community, and reach their potential.

The commitment is a roadmap to achieving better mental health outcomes for employees. It comprises a set of six key standards and supporting actions that any organisation can follow to improve and support the mental health of their people. The Commitment's ambition is to encourage employers of all sizes to join this national movement and improve standards of mental health care among the workforce.

The key standards are:

- prioritise mental health in the workplace by developing and delivering a systematic programme of activity;
- proactively ensure work design and organisational culture drive positive mental health outcomes;
- promote an open culture around mental health;
- increase organisational confidence and capability;
- provide mental health tools and support;
- increase transparency and accountability through internal and external reporting.

## **Decision**

We noted the contents of the report and agreed that Durham County Council becomes a signatory to the MIND Mental Health at Work Commitment. We would encourage other organisations to become signatories to the commitment.

## **9. Health Protection Assurance Annual Report**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services and the Director of Public Health which presented the Health Protection Assurance Annual Report.

The protection of the health of the population is one of the five mandated responsibilities given to local authorities as part of the Health and Social Care Act 2012. The Director of Public Health (DPH) for County Durham is responsible under legislation for the discharge of the local authority's public health functions. It is critical that the DPH receives assurance in relation to the health protection functions of screening; immunisation; outbreaks and communicable disease management; strategic regulation interventions and preparedness and response to incidents and emergencies.

The health protection functions delivered by a range of organisations in County Durham continue to demonstrate good overall performance. Good communication exists between the commissioners of the various programmes and the DPH; remedial and corrective interventions are instigated when necessary. Escalation procedures are in place in the event the DPH needs to raise concerns.

There remained areas for improvement and increased assurance. These recommendations were listed in full in the Health Protection Assurance Annual Report.

### **Decision**

We noted that the report provided broad assurance that effective processes are in place for each of the key strands of health protection activity and support the areas for improvement and further assurance, particularly the school-aged immunisation service contract and sexual health contract. We note that both of these contracts were priority areas of work for improvement, development and assurance.

## **10. Workforce Strategy 2024-2027**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources regarding the Workforce Strategy for 2024-2027. The purpose of a Workforce Strategy is to ensure organisations plan and prepare their workforce to deliver on strategic priorities and prepare for changes and challenges ahead.

A well-defined Workforce Strategy helps optimise productivity, adapt to changing conditions, and support long-term improvement. The Strategy will enable the Council to continue to deliver Council Plan priorities, as the



organisation becomes smaller, with reduced resources by optimising the workforce resource that we do have, ensuring we have the right people in the right roles doing the right thing with appropriate levels of skills and competence to address the challenges of today as well as tomorrow. The refreshed Workforce Strategy had been designed to support the delivery of Durham County Council's Council Plan which sets out the vision and long-term ambitions for the county.

## **Decision**

We approved the adoption of the refreshed Workforce Strategy.

### **11. Shopfront Design Guide, Energy Efficiency, Renewables and the Historic Environment, Biodiversity and Non-designated Heritage Asset Supplementary Planning Documents**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which sought approval to commence consultation on four Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). These are the second draft of the Shopfront Design Guide SPD and Energy Efficiency, Renewables, and the Historic Environment SPD, and the first draft of the Biodiversity SPD and Non-designated Heritage Asset (NDHA) SPD. All four documents supported the County Durham Plan (CDP) adopted in October 2020.

## **Decision**

We agreed that the:

- i. second draft of the Shopfront Design Guide SPD as detailed in Appendix 2 and the Energy Efficiency, Renewables and the Historic Environment SPD as detailed in Appendix 3 for consultation from 3 June to 14 July 2024;
- ii. power to make minor modifications and adopt the documents following consultation, be delegated to the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy, and Growth, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships. If significant changes were required, it would need to be considered by Cabinet for adoption; and
- iii. first draft of the Biodiversity SPD as detailed in Appendix 4 and the NDHA SPD as detailed in Appendix 5 for consultation from 3 June 2024 to 14 July 2024.

## **12. North East Devolution – Combined Authority Borrowing Powers - Key Decision: CEO/2024/001**

We considered a report of the Chief Executive which sought consent to the making of regulations by central government to provide the new mayoral combined authority, NECA, with borrowing powers in line with the devolution deal and the scheme which was subject to public consultation.

In order for NECA to be able to support its functions, it was envisaged that the combined authority would have borrowing powers. The North East Mayoral Combined Authority (Establishment and Functions) Order 2024 made provision for borrowing powers in relation to NECA's transport functions. However, borrowing powers for other functions must be dealt with by separate Regulations.

The report sought agreement in principle to consent to the making of the Regulations and delegated authority for the Chief Executive to provide that consent when requested to do so by the Secretary of State.

### **Decision**

We agreed in principle that the Council should consent to the making of the Regulations and duly authorised the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to issue the Council's formal consent to the Secretary of State when requested.

## **13. Early Help Strategy 2024-2026**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Service and Chair of Children, Young People and Families Partnership Board which presented the updated Early Help Strategy 2024-2026 for endorsement.

The review of the current Strategic Partnership Approach to Early Help commenced in 2023 and involved a range of stakeholders.

The newly titled County Durham Early Help Strategy 2024-2026 was based on evidence about the needs and wants of children and their families living in County Durham and from what partners across the early help system feel collectively they can achieve.

### **Decision**

We noted the work on developing the new Early Help Strategy and endorsed County Durham's Early Help Strategy 2024-26.

## **14. Update on the Corporate Asset Management Plan 2023-2025**

We received an update on the developments of the corporate asset management since the approval of the Corporate Asset Management Plan (CAMP) 2023-2025 in April 2023.

The update set out priorities for further improvements which would inform the development of the next iteration of the CAMP to be presented in 2025.

### **Decision**

We noted the changes in the estate metrics contained in paragraphs 16-22 of the Cabinet report and the plan to revisit these for the 2025 CAMP. We also noted the improvements achieved and the progress that had been made on the actions identified in the Corporate Asset Management Plan 2023-2025 since its approval in April 2023, along with the areas for continued development which will be presented to Cabinet in 2025.

### **Background Papers**

Cabinet Agenda and Reports

[Cabinet - 13 March 2024](#)

[Cabinet - 17 April 2024](#)

[Cabinet - 15 May 2024](#)

[Cabinet - 4 June 2024](#)

Councillor A Hopgood,  
Leader of the Council  
18 June 2024