

Durham County Council

At a Meeting of **Cabinet** held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Wednesday 16 October 2024 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor A Hopgood (Leader of the Council) in the Chair

Cabinet Members:

Councillors R Bell (Deputy Leader of the Council), T Henderson, C Hood, S McDonnell, J Rowlandson, 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 18 September 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 Review of Customer Access Point Service Offer [Key Decision: CORP/R/2024/005]

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which outlined proposals to adjust the face-to-face service offer delivered in Customer Access points (CAPs). The report detailed the findings of the consultation activity and equalities impact assessment (EIA) on the proposals, linked to the achievement of savings targets included in MTFP (14) and highlighted options for early realisation of a proportion of associated savings (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Councillor S McDonnell, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Digital, Customer Services and Procurement placed on record her thanks to the hard work by the team. In moving the recommendations in the report, Councillor McDonnell highlighted the extensive consultation process in this area, and how the Council had engaged with residents and communities. She thanked

the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board for their input which was set out in paragraph 69 of the report. Demand and footfall at Customer Access Points had decreased year upon year and visitor numbers had dropped since the pandemic. There was a need to manage the revised service offer and bring changes forward to next year, with 60% of appointments not being utilised. This would also bring savings forward to 2025/26. Councillor McDonnell explained that a change in customer contact to better align with the needs and demands of customers was required. This would maximise efficiency and effectiveness within the service and help move the service offer forward. The revised service officer would be expanded to provide surgeries in Newton Aycliffe and Peterlee.

Councillor A Shield, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Equalities and Inclusion explained that decisions made as a Cabinet must be information based and evidence led and seconded the recommendations. Councillor Shield commented that the need to implement change was unequivocal in this case. The Customer Access Points had seen sustained and significant reductions across all areas due to a change in customer behaviour. It was wholly appropriate for provision to be reviewed and the Service evolved.

Councillor M Wilkes, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change praised the outcome of the review which would offer surgeries in all existing locations and expand them further to Newton Aycliffe and Peterlee, whilst also saving money.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

5 Director of Public Health Annual Report 2024

The Cabinet considered a joint report of the Interim Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services and Director of Public Health which presented the 2024 Annual Report of the Director of Public Health for County Durham (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

Councillor C Hood, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Adult and Health Services welcomed and moved the Independent Annual Report. Councillor Hood spoke of the focus on the future health of County Durham residents. The work carried out with a range of key stakeholders to produce a comprehensive 'Dementia in County Durham' needs and asset assessment and the approach to wellbeing in developing the 'Growing up in County Durham' Strategy was highlighted. Councillor Hood also referred to the case study regarding the ambassador programme which had supported people into training and employment. The Annual Report built upon existing work and also identified new opportunities.

Councillor R Bell, Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance seconded the annual report. Councillor Bell highlighted the worrying national projections developed by the Health Foundation, citing statistics around anxiety and

depression. There were positive examples of what could be done to prevent some of the issues and gave examples of some of the case studies with the report. Councillor Bell spoke of the importance of using the report to guide resources to best meet the challenges ahead.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

6 Adult Social Care Update on the Outcome of the Local Authority Assessment by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) under the Health and Care Act (2022)

The Cabinet considered a report of the Interim Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services which provided an update on the outcome of the Care Quality Commission (CQC) Assessment of the way in which the Council discharges its adult social care duties under part 1 of the Care Act 2022 undertaken earlier this year. The report sought Cabinet approval for the Service Improvement Plan to address areas for development set out in the CQC report and wider service improvement aspirations, progress against which will be subject to annual reporting in the future (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Councillor C Hood, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Adult and Health Services commented that the 'Good' rating was achieved in how the Council delivered Adult Social Care in County Durham in line with the statutory requirements of the Care Act. The Council had performed strongly and to a good standard. A service improvement plan had been developed to addresses those areas highlighted for improvement and Cabinet would receive further updates in due course.

Councillor J Shuttleworth, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Rural Communities and Highways commented that the Service Improvement Plan would ensure actions were being progressed and monitored through appropriate governance arrangements and to ensure continuous improvement was embedded across the service.

The Leader of the Council added the Cabinet's appreciation to the outgoing Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services, Jane Robinson, for her many years of dedicated service, for her work on the CQC assessment and for the good position of the service. The Leader wished Jane well in her retirement and the very best to her successor, Michael Laing.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

7 Public Sector Equality Duty Annual Review 2023-2024 and Equality Policy

The Cabinet considered a report of the Chief Executive which sought agreement of the updated Equality Policy (2024-2028) and review of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) annual update 2023-24, prior to publication. The report also included an update on staff networks and the Changing Places toilets funding programme (for copy of report see file of minutes).

The Annual Review and Refresh all EM and employmentss must take responsibility for E&I in the provision of excellent council services and their working relationship with colleagues, partners and members of the public.

In Moving the report, Councillor A Shield, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Equality and Inclusion commented that inequality affected people in different ways. The Annual Review set out how the Council tackled and raised visibility. Councillor Shield referred to the expansion of the changing place toilet facilities installed at Locomotion, Hardwick Park, Raby Castle and Teesdale Leisure Centre. Such facilities made it easier for people with disabilities and their carers to plan and enjoy days out and had been funded following a successful bid to the Government. This was just one example.

Equality analysis was embedded within the decision making process to understand equality impact across different groups. The Council always strived to engage and consult with all communities through organisations such as the Youth Council, Disability Partnership, Rainbow Alliance and staff networks.

Councillor T Henderson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services echoed the comments of Councillor A Shield and the comprehensive work that had been undertaken and seconded the recommendation in the report.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.