

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 16 October and 13 November 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. Item 1 - Review of Customer Access Point Service Offer (Key Decision: CORP/R/2024/005)

We 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) which reflected reduced demand whilst preserving channel choice. 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. The review established the impact and potential benefits of moving from a traditional, building led operating model to a more responsive offer with a focus on delivering customer service support to the places it was most needed and reducing the time spent in current locations to better reflect the demand for service.

Decision

We noted the content of the report and the reduced footfall being seen in CAPs and increased demand across other channels and noted the proposal to accelerate the majority of the associated savings currently profiled to be achieved in 2026/27 into 2025/26.

We approved the proposed demand led adjustment to service offer across the CAP estate with effect from 1 October 2025 in line with option 1 set out in the report.

2. Director of Public Health Annual Report 2024

We considered a joint report of the Interim Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services and the Director of Public Health which presented the 2024 Annual Report of the Director of Public Health for County Durham which set out the health of the local population.

Decision

We received the Director of Public Health Annual Report 2024 and agreed to its publication.

3. 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)

We 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 also sought our approval for a Service Improvement Plan which would address areas for development set out in the CQC report and wider service improvement aspirations.

Decision

We noted the outcome of the CQC assessment and approved the Adult Social Care Service Improvement Plan 2024-2025.

We also agreed to receive annual update reports on progress with the Service Improvement Plan.

4. Public Sector Equality Duty annual review 2023-2024 and Equality Policy

We considered a report of the Chief Executive which sought agreement of an updated Equality Policy (2024-2028) and reviewed 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.

The corporate equality, diversity and inclusion programme is broad and cross cutting, necessary to ensure that the council continually addresses its legal responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010, in particular, discharge of the public sector equality duty (PSED).

All services, staff and members must take responsibility for equality and inclusion in the delivery of excellent council services and in their working relationships with colleagues and the public.

Decision

We adopted the refreshed Equality Policy 2024-28 and reviewed and approved the Public Sector Equality Duty annual update 2023-24.

We also noted the updates in relation to the key areas of staff networks and MHCLG funded Changing Places Toilets programme.

5. Council Tax Base 2025/26 and Forecast Surplus / Deficit on the Council Tax Collection Fund (Key Decision: CORP/R/2024/002)

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which sought to determine the council's tax base for domestic properties liable to pay council tax, which is an important component in the council's budget setting process for 2025/26 and to report on the estimated council tax collection fund surplus / deficit as at 31 March 2025.

Decision

We approved the council tax base for the financial year 2025/26 for the county, which had been calculated (incorporating consultation outcomes) to be 148,760.6 Band D equivalent properties.

We noted the impact on individual Town and Parish council tax bases, including the allocations of Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Grant allocations for the financial year 2025/26.

We also noted and agreed that the forecasted Council Tax Collection Fund position at 31 March 2025 as set out in the report, be formally declared and the two principal precepting bodies to the Collection Fund - County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority and Durham Police and Crime Commissioner notified accordingly.

6. Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 - Annual Review of the Council's use of powers

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services which informed Cabinet about the Council's use of its powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 ('RIPA') during the period of 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

The report also asked us to consider and adopt the annual review of the Council's Corporate RIPA Guidance following consideration by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 28 October 2024.

Decision

We noted the Council's use of RIPA during the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 and approved the proposed changes to the Council's Corporate RIPA Guidance.

We also approved the proposed changes to the Council's abridged RIPA policy document.

7. Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP) – Condition and Funding Update

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which provided an update on the Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP), including investment and highway condition across the county.

The adopted highway is the Council's most valuable asset. The HAMP sets out the long-term plan for managing the highway network so that its condition is maximised for the available budget.

Decision

We noted and approved the updated HAMP policy; and the updated HAMP annual update report.

8. Community Engagement Review

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which provided an update on the community engagement review project, in particular proposals for the governance, funding, and branding arrangements to replace Area Action Partnerships with a Local Network model.

The report provided an update on the outcomes of the Local Network Boundary consultation exercise and sought approval on proposals to change the current 14 Area Action Partnership boundaries to create 12 new Local Networks.

Decision

We noted the update on the community engagement review project and the outcomes from the countywide consultation exercise for the proposed Local Network boundaries.

We agreed the new Local Network boundaries to create 12 Local Networks. We also approved the governance arrangements and terms of reference, funding guidelines and identity and branding arrangements for the County Durham Community Network and Local Networks.

We delegated authority to the Head of Economic Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships to approve the operating procedures for the Local Networks and agreed the proposed timescales for implementation.

9. 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 the second draft of the 'Biodiversity' and 'Non-designated Heritage Asset' (NDHA) Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). The SPDs support the County Durham Plan (CDP) adopted in October 2020.

Decision

We agreed the second draft of the Biodiversity SPD and NDHA SPD for consultation from 25 November 2024 to 12 January 2025.

We delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy, and Growth, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships, the power to make minor modifications and adopt the documents following consultation. If any significant changes were required, the SPDs would be considered by Cabinet for adoption.

Background Papers

Cabinet Agenda and Reports

[Cabinet - 16 October 2024](#)

[Cabinet - 13 November 2024](#)

Councillor A Hopgood
Leader of the Council
3 December 2024