

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Cabinet** held in Durham Town Hall, Market Place, Durham on **Wednesday 18 December 2013 at 10.00 a.m.**

Present:

Councillor S Henig (Leader of the Council) in the Chair

Members of Cabinet:

Councillors J Brown, N Foster, L Hovvels, O Johnson, A Napier, M Nicholls, M Plews, B Stephens and E Tomlinson

Other Members:

Councillors E Adam, J Armstrong, J Clare, P Conway, M Dixon, I Jewell, R Lumsdon, A Surtees and R Todd

1 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Calculation of Council Tax Base 2014/15 Key Decision: CORP/R/13/04

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director Resources which sought agreement on the Council's Council Tax Base for all domestic properties liable to pay council tax, as part of the council's budget setting process for 2014/15 (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the recommendations contained in the report be approved.

4 2014/15 Budget, Medium Term Financial Plan(4) 2014/15 - 2016/17 and Service Plans
Key Decision: CORP/R/13/02

The Cabinet considered a joint report of the Corporate Director Resources and Assistant Chief Executive which provided an update on the 2014/15 budget, the Medium Term Financial Plan up to 2016/17, the Council Plan and Service Planning process (for copy see file of minutes).

Members commented on the local government financial settlement from the Government that was expected later that day, and although the figures had been forecast members expressed grave concerns at the impact once again this was going to have on Durham. The Authority would keep lobbying the government on the impact to Durham and the North East which appeared unfair as there was no regard to need or to the revenue levied from the council tax. Cabinet accepted that the Council would take its share in reducing the country's deficit however emphasised that this should be done fairly.

Resolved:

That the recommendations contained in the report be approved.

5 Draft Tree Management Policy
Key Decision: NS/25/13

The Cabinet considered a joint report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services and Corporate Director Regeneration and Economic Development on the consultation on a draft countywide tree policy for the management of all trees under Durham County Council's ownership and for those trees in private ownership which pose a safety risk to the public highway (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the recommendations contained in the report be approved.

6 Climate Change Strategy and Delivery Plan
Key Decision: R&ED/12/13

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Economic Development which informed of the progress of the Climate Change Strategy and Delivery Plan and requested direction regarding carbon reduction targets (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the recommendations contained in the report be approved.

7 Proposals for the Development of Market Rent and Market Sale Housing in Durham
Key Decision: R&ED/18/13

The Cabinet considered a joint report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Economic Development and Corporate Director Resources which outlined a proposal for the Council to develop its own market rent and market sale housing on County Council owned land and considered how best it could be delivered (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the recommendations contained in the report be approved.

8 Response to Secretary of State Consultation - Creation of a Combined Authority for the North East
Key Decision: R&ED/20/13

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Economic Development which provided information on the Secretary of State Consultation on the proposal to establish a Combined Authority for Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear and ask Cabinet to consider the proposed response from the seven local authorities in the North East (for copy see file of minutes).

The Leader advised that the decision to be made was urgent because of the limited time in which the responses could be submitted to the Secretary of State, and due to this it needs to be free from call-in pursuant to paragraph 20(a) of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules. He advised that The Chairman of the Council in consultation with the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board agreed that the decision proposed was reasonable in all circumstances and to it being treated as a matter of urgency, and that the call-in procedure would not apply in these circumstances.

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Economic Development asked the Cabinet to consider endorsing the single local authority response to the Secretary of State. He also suggested that the response include that Durham be protected from the liability which arises from the transport functions of the ITA and Nexus.

Councillor J Armstrong, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board advised that at the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 9 December 2013 members considered a cover report and presentation focusing on the consultation by the Secretary of State on the proposal to establish a Combined Authority for Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear. There was broad support by the members of the Committee for the principle of the Combined Authority, and the following comments were made:-

- The consultation period was too short, a very tight timescale for consultation particularly as it included the Christmas and New Year holiday periods.

- Due to the tight national timescale and the timing of the consultation this had resulted in a somewhat restricted engagement activity considering the proposed remit of the Combined Authority.
- In order to ensure transparency and openness in the decision making process, there needed to be robust and fit for purpose arrangements for scrutiny to ensure accountability.

Cabinet members advised of their support for the collective approach across the region, emphasising that this was not another level of local government, it would be a collective body that would be influential and have united voice for the north east at national level.

Resolved:

1. Agreed that the decision to be made was an urgent matter which should be excluded from call-in pursuant to paragraph 20(a) of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.
2. Endorsed the single local authority response to the Secretary of State consultation.
3. Agreed that the comments made by Overview and Scrutiny be included in the response by Durham, and that the response include for Durham to be protected from the transport liabilities.
4. Agreed to delegate to the Corporate Director in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration the finalisation of the joint response and the submission to Government by the 2 January 2014.

**9 Review of Care Connect
Key Decision: R&ED/23/13**

The Cabinet considered a joint report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Economic Development and Corporate Director of Children and Adult Services on the review of the Care Connect services and options available to meet the CAS MTFP savings proposal to reduce their expenditure on the Care Connect service from £3.3m to £2.3m from 2014 (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the recommendations contained in the report be approved.

10 World War 1 Centenary Activity Programme

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director Neighbourhood Services which provided an overview of activity being arranged across the County to mark the Centenary of World War 1 (WW1-100) and sought member involvement in the planning process (for copy see file of minutes).

In relation to paragraph 30 of the report The Corporate Director Neighbourhood Services advised that the services identified had not been launched, a bid for HLF funding had been submitted in September, and if successful would come into effect in March 2015.

Resolved:

That the recommendations contained in the report be approved.

11 Boundary Amendments and Character Appraisals for Gainford Conservation Area

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Economic Development which sought approval of an amended boundary and character appraisal for the Gainford Conservation Area (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the recommendations contained in the report be approved.