

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

Cabinet

At a Meeting of the **Cabinet** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Wednesday 8 February 2017 at 10.00 am**

Present

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

Cabinet Members:

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

Also Present:

Councillors J Armstrong, J Clare, P Conway, P May, and J Shuttleworth

1. Public Questions

There were no public questions.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations.

4. Medium Term Financial Plan 2017/18 to 2019/20 and Revenue and Capital Budget 2017/18 Key Decision: CORP/R/16/02

The Cabinet considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Resources, and Director of Transformation and Partnerships which provided financial information to enable Cabinet to make recommendations to full Council to agree the 2017/18 balanced revenue budget, an outline Medium Term Financial Plan MTFP(7) 2017/18 to 2019/20 and a fully funded capital programme (for copy see file of minutes).

Councillor J Armstrong, Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Management Board advised that Scrutiny members had met three times so far to consider

the work to prepare the medium term financial plan. Overall members agreed that the Council deserves credit on the handling of austerity measures, including with regard to reserves. Members commented that a really good assessment of the position had been provided, and thanked officers for their work, with specific comments being made on the additional pressures facing children's services, the importance of ensuring looking after children, and the need to keep a close eye on the Government commitment to funding the Better Care programme.

Members agreed that there had been a good and robust MTFP consultation process with some suggestions on methodology set out within the report. At the scrutiny session held on 26 January members made additional comments to highlight to Cabinet to ask about plans to utilise the additional flexibility in relation to the social care precept, and to express concern about the dangers of cost shunting to social care. Scrutiny would meet again on 13 February to consider the final settlement report, and report those to full Council.

Cabinet members commented on the months of detailed planning that had gone into the MTFP process, and re-iterated the scale of the cuts that has been imposed on the authority over the last 7 years which were unprecedented. By the end of the financial year savings of £185.7million would have been delivered, and based on the forecast total savings over the period 2011/12 to 2019/20 is £245.3 million. Comments were made on the unfairness for Durham for another year on the level of precept it receives in comparison to other authorities, and that this unfair distribution of funding continued to have an impact on Durham's spending power. Durham did not receive any of the transitional funding that other authorities had last year, and does not receive any of the rural services delivery grant which Durham should be entitled to. Cabinet members continue to lobby central government on this.

Despite the unfair share of funding, the council would take measures to balance the budget, however it was becoming more and more difficult to find the savings required and that further service reviews and restructures were planned. Members of the public who had taken part in the budget consultation exercise in the autumn of 2016 were thanked for their feedback. The protection of front line services would be continued as far as possible. Proposals for the continuation of the council tax reduction scheme which they have protected since 2013 were being made, and it was emphasised that Durham was one of only a few authorities to do so.

Cabinet members commended officers on their continued accuracy for forecasting, and thanked members and officers for all their work input into the process.

Resolved:

Upon a recorded vote being taken a unanimous vote in favour of the recommendations detailed in the report being recommended for full council approval was reached by Cabinet members.

5. School Admission Arrangements Academic Year 2018/2019

Key Decision: CYPS/01/16

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services which sought Cabinet to consider and approve the proposed admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for the 2018/19 academic year (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

6. Annual Review of the Constitution

The Cabinet considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services that presented proposals for the revision of the Council's constitution (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.