

## Cabinet

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday, 14th July, 2016.

**Present:** Cllr Robert Cook(Chair), Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Nigel Cooke, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Michael Smith, Cllr Norma Wilburn

**Officers:** Neil Schneider(CE), Ian Miles, Kirsty Wannop(DCE), Beccy Brown, Jonathan Nertnery(HR&L), Garry Cummings, Ian Coxon(F&BS), Richard McGuckin(EG&D), Jane Humphreys, Martin Gray, Jane Wright(CHS), Reuben Kench(CL&E), Jamie McCann(CS), Lynda Borwn, Julie Nixon(TT)

**Also in attendance:** Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Chris Clough, Cllr Phil Dennis, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Elsi Hampton, Joe Hughes(RC Diocesan Office Newcastle), Andrew Ramsey(St Michaels RC Academy), Mary Tate(St Joseph's RC Primary School), Members of the Public.

**Apologies:** None

### **CAB 38/16 Evacuation Procedure**

The evacuation procedure was noted.

### **CAB 39/16 Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Bob Cook declared a personal non prejudicial interest in Agenda item 5 – Medium Term Financial Plan Outturn – March 2016 as he was a Member of the Tees Valley Combined Authority

Cllr Jim Beall declared a personal non prejudicial interest in Agenda item 5 – Medium Term Financial Plan Outturn – March 2016 as he was a substitute Member of the Tees Valley Combined Authority

Cllr Steve Nelson declared a personal non prejudicial interest in Agenda item 5 – Medium Term Financial Plan Outturn as he was a Board Member of Thirteen Group.

Cllr Ann McCoy declared a personal non prejudicial item in the Agenda Item 7 – Welfare Reform Update – Q4 2015/16 as she was a representative on Stockton District Information Advice Service.

Cllr Steve Nelson declared a personal non prejudicial item in the Agenda Item 7 – Welfare Reform Update – Q4 2015/16 as he was a Board Member of Thirteen Group.

Cllr Bob Cook declared a personal non prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 8 – Xentrall Annual Report as he was a representative on NEPO.

Cllr Norma Wilburn declared a personal non prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 9 – Stockton Riverside College Progress Update as she was on the Board of Stockton Riverside College.

Cllr Steve Nelson declared a personal non prejudicial interest in the Agenda Item 10 – Accommodation Care Leavers and Homeless Young People as he was a Board Member on Thirteen Group.

Cllr Steve Nelson declared a personal non prejudicial item in the Agenda Item

12 – Early Help Approach as he was a Board Member on Catalyst.

Cllr Steve Nelson declared a personal non prejudicial item in the Agenda Item 13 – Looked After Children and Care leavers Strategy; 2016-18 Refresh as he was a Board Member on Thirteen Group.

**CAB 40/16 Minutes of the Meeting held on 27th June 2016**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 27th June 2016.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 27th June 2016 were confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

**CAB 41/16 MTFP Outturn - March 2016**

Consideration was given to a report on Medium Term Financial Plan – March 2016.

The report focused on the financial performance and position at the end of the 2015/16 financial year and updated the Medium Term Financial Plan as at 31 March 2016

The details of the MTFP position of each service were outlined within the report. Officers had continued to be mindful of the financial pressures and had been continuing to monitor expenditure closely in all areas.

Members noted that the overall position for CESC (Non Big Ticket) had improved by £296,000 since the last report, largely due to staff vacancies in advance of service reviews.

The position for DANS (Non Big Ticket) at the financial year end had worsened overall by £72,000. Additional Catering income had been offset by increased pressures in the Transport Service.

The position for Resources, Law and Democracy and Public Health were broadly in line with the previous projection.

A summary of the outturn position for each Big Ticket area was detailed within the report.

At the time that the 2016/17 budget was set it was expected that a sum of £878,000 would be available as on-off resource. This sum was allocated for use as a one-off resource in 2016/17. The position at outturn had improved by £975,000, reducing to £725,000 after accounting for the recommended allocation in respect of Londonderry Bridge. A number of factors had contributed to the improved position, largely relating to the technical aspects of the Business Rates Scheme.

The work to facilitate the replacement of Londonderry Bridge which removed the flood risk from communities across Lustrum Beck required the full closure of Durham Road. A number of options were considered in consultation with members and community representatives that considered the impact of having to divert buses as a result of the road closure. On balance and following very

detailed analysis of community views and risk assessment processes it was required to keep diverted buses away from narrow residential streets and local schools but this required buses to operate lengthy diversions along Durham Road bypass and required additional vehicles to maintain the current frequency of services. This required therefore a financial contribution to supporting the additional bus services as this was a direct result of the Council's activity in the bridge replacement and the additional funding of £250K was required to support this with several bus operators who operate in that area.

The Capital budget for 2012/18 was provided.

The Department for Education had recently announced a Basic Need Grant allocation of £31.5m for 2018/19. This was in recognition of the pressure on School Places in areas of the Borough and an Investment Plan was currently being developed which would be presented to Cabinet at a future meeting.

Members noted that the programme had been updated to reflect the approvals contained within the 2016/17 Budget Report and to reflect changes to the programme resulting from the sourcing of external funding. The changes were summarised.

The Programme had also been updated to reflect schemes which had been completed in 2015/16.

Following the formation of the Tees Valley Combined Authority in April 2016, balances previously held by Stockton on Tees Borough Council as accountable body to the LEP/TVU would require to be transferred to the new Combined Authority. The balances were summarised along with the delegation of administrative functions.

RESOLVED that:-

- That the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and the current level of General Fund balances be noted.
- That surplus General Fund Balances of £250,000 be allocated to the developments at Londonderry Bridge.
- That the revised Capital Programme be noted.
- That the balances of £52,622,790 be transferred to the Tees Valley Combined Authority.
- That the Council accept a delegation from the Tees Valley Combined Authority to undertake the administrative functions.

**CAB  
42/16      Non-Financial Performance 2015/16**

Consideration was given to a report that detailed the Non-Financial Performance of the Council in 2015/16.

The Council continued to face huge challenges with the continuous sustained

reductions to local authority and other public sector budgets. Alongside this it was experiencing increased demand for services particularly in the areas of children's and adults social care and a reliance on council and council-commissioned services.

The Council had continued, through everything it had done this year, to maintain our absolute focus on our key policy principles of:

- a. Protecting those who are most vulnerable
- b. Promoting equality of opportunity
- c. Developing strong and healthy communities
- d. Creating economic prosperity

The Council were committed to developing its organisational effectiveness. It had:

- a. Continued with its review of services to deliver savings of £73m
- b. Received another positive report from its Auditors "The Council continued to have a strong approach in considering a range of options, regularly updating and agreeing its plans well ahead of the relevant financial year"
- c. Maintained its Customer Service Excellence accreditation for the fifth year
- d. Been shortlisted for the sixth year running for the Association of Public Service Excellence awards for the prestigious "Council of the Year" award as well as being shortlisted in 4 further categories and winning with our partners for the psst... Positively Stockton campaign
- e. Won awards this year at the National Constructing Excellence awards, the Local Authority Building Control's Northern Region awards, the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) Robert Stephenson awards, and the Urban Design awards
- f. Maintained its Silver Investor in People award and also achieved the Silver Better Health at Work award accreditation
- g. Most importantly it had been pleased to receive the feedback about our services from the MORI Residents' survey undertaken across the borough in 2015. The results showed improvements from the last survey and helped to focus work in areas that the Council thought needed improvement:
  - i. 73% of residents were satisfied with how the Council run things; an increase of 9 percentage points on the previous survey
  - ii. 61% of residents agreed that the Council provided value for money; an increase of 4 percentage points on the previous survey
  - iii. 69% of residents trust the Council; an increase of 2 percentage points on the previous survey

The Council was committed to delivering high quality, customer focused services that meet the changing needs of our communities. In spite of the financial challenges it remained fiercely proud of what it had achieved over the last year:

- a. Many of its residents and visitors to our borough positively comment on how welcoming and inviting the place was, how pleased they were with the changes made to our town centres, housing regeneration schemes and the 'invest to save' street lighting improvements
- b. Our year-round programme of events, the majority of which were free, remains hugely popular and successful both in terms of people experiencing them and the additional income they bring in to the borough
- c. It continued to do the very best that it could for the children and young people in its care, often in difficult circumstances, and remain resolute on our

commitment to this as corporate parents

d. It was challenging and supporting our schools to carry on making improvements in exam results

e. It was actively encouraging local businesses to create more apprenticeship opportunities as well as developing them in the Council

In order to deliver the further reductions required by Central Government and meet the medium and long-term challenges facing the Council it still needed to think and act differently. It needed to transform and target our services still further, reduce demand and increase inward investment.

The scale of the challenge the Council was facing made it inevitable that there would be further job losses and cuts to services and the harsh reality was these cuts would become increasingly more notable. It would therefore be wrong to believe that it could continue to take resources out of the organisation without it having an impact upon performance.

62% of the performance indicators had achieved the targets set at the start of the year. This was an improvement on 2014/15 but was also reflective of the difficulty of setting performance targets in changing and challenging circumstances:

a. performance targets set at the start of the year did not accurately reflect the impact of budget reductions the Council made during the year

b. a significant number of performance indicators had been adversely affected by factors that extended beyond the direct influence and control of the local authority.

In producing the Council Plan for 2016-19 the Council had addressed this with a smaller number of key performance indicators that were more focused upon our policy principles and our key objectives.

RESOLVED that the achievements and performance be noted.

**CAB  
43/16**

#### **Q4 Welfare Reform Update**

Consideration was given to a report that provided an update on monitoring of the outcomes/impact of welfare reform and a summary of actions undertaken by the Council to mitigate against circumstances arising from the implementation of these changes.

The monitoring framework was set out under the following issues:

- Advice and Information Services;
- Discretionary Housing Payments;
- Social Fund/Crisis Payments;
- Housing;
- Local Council Tax Support Scheme;
- Employment; and
- General/cross cutting.

The Welfare Rights Unit was now a part of the Council's Finance and Business Services Directorate, and was based at 16 Church Road, Stockton-on-Tees.

This was a small service, consisting of a manager, four welfare rights officers and a first contact officer. Additional resources had been provided to enable two additional welfare rights officers to be seconded for a temporary period to the service, helping to undertake specific projects.

The Welfare Rights Unit were producing some excellent results, with £1,414,306 in additional benefits paid in 2015-16 to some of the borough's most vulnerable people, including £839,715 to social care clients.

An example of the type of project work that the Welfare Rights Unit had recently undertaken was provided.

The Council's Welfare Rights Unit (WRU), working in partnership with the Council's Housing Benefits Service, identified nearly 1,150 such households containing an over 85 year old.

Of these households, 388 were not on a pass-ported benefit and it was this group that was initially targeted in the benefit take-up campaign. Partner organisations, Stockton District Advice and Information Services (SDAIS), the Thirteen Group and Age UK agreed to assist with a number of claimants.

A personal letter was sent to each targeted household, explaining the reason for contact, and requesting that the householder contact the Welfare Rights Unit, so that a benefits check could be carried out.

For each respondent, a Welfare Rights Officer carried out a full benefits check, identifying any further entitlement to benefits, assisting them to make claims and liaising with appropriate agencies.

#### Outcomes

Personal letters sent: 388

Responses received: 160

No Further Action: 43

Home Visits: 117

Claims Made: 158 (some of the households were entitled to claim for more than one benefit).

From the 160 responses received, home visits were organised for 117 households. As a result of these 117 home visits, 48 households were found to have had their correct entitlement and no further action was taken on those cases.

However, 69 households were found to have an entitlement to additional assistance, with 155 separate successful claims made for combinations of Attendance Allowance, Pension Credit, Council Tax Support, Housing Benefit and Carer's Allowance.

For these 69 households, the average award per week was £98.44, which

equates to £353,220 when calculated on an annualised basis.

In addition to the average of £98.44 per week additional income achieved, a further £57,560 was awarded in backdated benefits to these vulnerable people, an average of £834.20 per household, made up mainly of Attendance Allowance and Pension Credit.

Members were provided with copies of some of the positive feedback received.

Stage Two of the benefits take-up campaign would concentrate on the nearly 800 households identified with an over 85 year old, that were currently on a pass-ported benefit, and it was hoped that this will be completed by March 2017.

The Welfare Rights Unit have been provided with a list of 400 households from the Department of Work and Pensions that were at risk of detriment from the newly reduced Benefit Cap of £20,000 per annum.

This list was being examined to determine the levels of cap for individual households. The families most likely to be adversely affected would be contacted to advise of possible exemptions and to provide budgeting support and help with moving into work. Full details of this campaign would be provided in the next Welfare Reform report.

Stockton and District Advice and Information Service (SDAIS) recently led a partnership of four voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations which had been successful in a bid to bring in significant new funding from the Big Lottery Fund to support vulnerable people in the borough.

The funding was to develop services for people in hardship and crisis and it is a partnership of four agencies including:

- SDAIS - to give holistic advice and on-going support including benefits, debt and housing advice; co-ordination of project;
- Billingham Food Bank – to develop their services in the borough;
- Bridges – to provide support to people in crisis affected by substance misuse; and
- ACTES – Achieving Change Through Enterprising Solutions - to help people in crisis move into training and employment.

The four organisations had joined together to deliver the “Help through Crisis” project in the borough, which would provide long term support to move people away from crisis and develop their resilience and stability. The total funding secured was just under £500,000 for five years, meaning that each year around £100,000 would be split between the four agencies to deliver this new project.

This project was one of only five successful bids in the North East. One reason the bid was successful is because the project builds on existing work that SDAIS, the food bank and Bridges had been doing for the last year. Members may recall that this initial work was funded through a one-year grant from Stockton BC’s Public Health budget, and has meant that there was better co-ordination and reporting on the numbers of people using food banks and the reasons why they were going to emergency food providers. This has shown that the single biggest cause of people having to access food banks was due to

problems about welfare benefits; including benefit sanctions and payment delays.

It was this initial investment to address some of the problems linked to welfare reform that had now led to this significant new funding coming in to provide enhanced support services for vulnerable people in crisis in the borough.

Details of the service aims and projections were provided.

Details were also provided on the following:-

- Supported Accommodation
- Universal Credit
- Administering Housing Benefit during the implementation of Universal Credit
- Local Council Tax Support
- Supporting to struggling Council Tax Payers
- Bedroom Restrictions
- Advice and Information Services
- Discretionary Housing Payments
- Social Fund/Crisis Payments
- Housing
- Local Council Tax Support Scheme
- Tax Credits

RESOLVED that

- The contents of this report be noted
- The performance monitoring outcomes and observations provided be noted.
- The additional funding of approximately £70,000 per annum from the Welfare Reform Fund for three years from 2017-18 to 2019-20 to maintain the current level of staffing and service in the Council's Welfare Rights Unit be approved.
- The additional funding of approximately £40,000 per annum from the Welfare Reform Fund for three years from 2017-18 to 2019-20 to continue to assist residents in receipt of Local Council Tax Support to access all the relevant benefit and support they were entitled to be approved.

**CAB  
44/16**      **Xentrall Annual Report**

Cabinet considered a report that reviewed the progress and performance of Xentrall Shared Services, the Stockton and Darlington partnership, which was established in May 2008 and was now eight years through the original ten year partnership agreement.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**CAB  
45/16**      **Stockton Riverside College Progress Update**

Consideration was given to a report that presented the College's current position as well as future aspirations. Over the last three years Stockton Riverside College had transformed. A review of College performance was provided and summarised the College's position in respect of the Area Review



and the proposed merger with Darlington College; identifying the potential benefits and opportunities therein. Detail was then provided regarding the communities that the College serves. The report draws attention to the significant work undertaken with unemployed people and the response to the recent SSI closure. Also featured in this report was the extensive work the College does with business, the growth in apprenticeships and current work with NETA.

RESOLVED that

1. The progress of the college and the on-going partnership between the college and the Council be noted.

2. Cabinet thank the outgoing Chair of Governors, Steve Cossins, for his work since 2011 and welcome the new Chair, Mark White, to the position.

**CAB  
46/16**

### **Accommodation for Care Leavers and Homeless Young People**

Consideration was given to a report on the accommodation to care leavers and homeless young people.

There was a legal requirement for the Council to provide suitable accommodation to care leavers and homeless young people aged 16 and 17. The Council commissions a range of housing related support for a variety of different client groups. It was acknowledged that this could be expanded and more effectively targeted in order to better meet the needs of care leavers and homeless young people in the Borough. The report updated Members on both the progress made to date and outlined the further actions proposed in order to address this critical issue.

The report also considered the likely impact of proposed Government welfare and social housing policy reforms on all young people in the Borough.

RESOLVED that

1. The proposals detailed in the report (paragraphs 6 – 9) be endorsed which were aimed at maximising the availability of suitable accommodation for care leavers and homeless young people in the borough as summarised below:

The on-going review of Housing Related Support (HRS) provided an opportunity to address the current shortage of supported accommodation for care leavers and homeless young people:

- Stage 1: a review of all existing service contracts had been undertaken.

Specifically in relation to care leavers and homeless young people contract variations for appropriate services had specified that providers would (i) be required to allow access to those aged 16years+ and (ii) all future vacancies must be considered by the Youth Accommodation Panel or Housing Gateway Service. This was now in operation.

- Stage 2: would include a formal procurement exercise with newly commissioned services/contracts in place for 2017/18. Relevant new contracts would include the revisions detailed above and therefore facilitate on-going

access to accommodation services.

- The immediate impact of the actions had been to expand the range of accommodation services available to care leavers and homeless young people, this in turn would support the move-on of young people from temporary supported accommodation to independent living.

2. Cabinet receive future reports detailing how the accommodation needs of care leavers and homeless young people continue to be addressed (specifically in relation to the Housing Related Support review) and updates on the broader implications of Government welfare and social housing policy on all young people in our Borough.

**CAB 47/16 Children's Services Strategy for Change and Improvement**

Cabinet considered a report that presented the first Children's Services Strategy for Change and Improvement. The non-statutory strategy sets out how the Council would deliver change and improvement in children's services 2016-18, to deliver the Council Plan priorities.

It had been developed in response to:

- a. The development of the Council Plan and the need for clearer threads to operational activity;
- b. The need for a sustained focus on self-assessment and improvement, at least partly in response to forthcoming Ofsted inspection;
- c. The need to bring greater clarity to priorities for employees and partners to assist in the redesign, review and recommissioning of services and collaboration on priorities.

The detailed strategy was provided for Members and a summary of the strategy was provided.

RESOLVED that the Children's Services Strategy for Change and Improvement be approved.

**CAB 48/16 Early Help Approach**

Cabinet considered a report that provided Members with an update on the implementation of early help. It sets out the proposed revised approach and operating model for early help in Stockton. It was based on discussions with partners and staff, and draws on the outcomes from discussions at the Health and Wellbeing Board, Children and Young People's Partnership, Stockton Local Safeguarding Children's Board, Safer Stockton Partnership and Early Help Partnership Group. It was also based on research on and discussions with other areas.

RESOLVED that the approach be approved.

**CAB 49/16 Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2016-18**

Consideration was given to a report that sets out the proposed refresh of the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy for 2016-18. It had been developed as a more partnership oriented approach, developed through the

Multi-Agency Looked After Partnership, which in turn reports into the Children and Young people's Partnership. It included an overall strategy, a refresh of the pledge and an update of the sufficiency strategy element.

RESOLVED that the strategy be approved.

**CAB  
50/16**      **Home to School Transport Policy**

Consideration was given to a report that provided details of the consultation response received. On 19th May 2016 Cabinet approved a recommendation to consult on a revised, draft 'Home to School Transport Policy' with a requirement to follow the statutory guidance on the consultation period of 28 days. The Council's legal advisor was satisfied that this statutory requirement had been met. The report detailed the responses and outcomes of the consultation that took place between 20th May and 5th July 2016.

Members were provided with details of the consultation methodology, consultation question responses. The 4 key themes that come out of the consultation were:-

- Discrimination
- Potential increased costs
- Disruption to family arrangements
- Confusions over definitions and process

Some of the responses included a request for flexibility from the Council where children were transported on the basis of distance or safe walking route and where there was parental preference for a faith school. In such instances, respondents had requested that the Council, where transport costs would not be more than zone or nearest suitable school, should take into account parental preference. If the decision was taken to adopt the draft policy from September 2017, a clause to this effect could be included.

Members of the public were also in attendance at the meeting including parents and school and diocesan representatives who wished to object to the Policy change. Those who wished to speak were given the opportunity to address the Members. Comments were made that matched the 4 key themes.

Responses to the 4 key themes were detailed and provided for Members.

Further comments by members of the public could be summarised as follows:-

- A suitable school for a catholic family should be a catholic school.
- St Joseph's RC Primary, St Michaels RC Academy and catholic families from Norton had strong links going back many decades.
- The amount of money that would be saved was questioned.

In response Cabinet noted that:-

- Budget estimates could fluctuate year on year therefore the estimate was only an estimate.
- The decision to consider the draft policy was not taken lightly and cuts from Government meant difficult decisions had to be made to ensure that the most vulnerable could be protected.
- Stockton was 1 of only 2 authorities within the North East that hadn't already made the policy change in relation to faith school transport.

- Other schools had made Transport provision for students from communities to access their schools.

Cabinet was provided with details of the proposed appeals procedure.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The draft policy be formally adopted as the 'Home to School Transport Policy' of the Council from September 2017.
2. The Council, where transport costs would not be more than zone or nearest suitable school, take into account parental preference.
3. The appeals procedure set out in the Statutory Guidance be publicised and implemented from September 2016 be agreed.

**CAB  
51/16**      **LA Nominations**

Consideration was given to a report on Local Authority Governors on School Governing Bodies.

In accordance with the procedure for the appointment of school / academy governors, approved as Minute CAB 27/13 of the Cabinet (13 June 2013), Cabinet was invited to consider the nominations to school/academy Governing Bodies as attached to the report.

RESOLVED that the following appointment be made to the vacant Governorships subject to successful List 99 check and Personal Disclosure:-

- Durham Lane Primary School – Mrs M Rigg
- Hartburn Primary School – Mrs J Appleby
- Rosebrook Primary School – Cllr J Beall
- St Patrick's RC Primary School - Graeme Clark
- The Management of Bishopton Centre Pupil Referral Until – Mrs D Merrett

**CAB  
52/16**      **River Tees Leisure Access & Development**

Cabinet considered a report that provided information on River Tees Leisure Access and Development.

The River Tees was an important strategic asset providing recreational and leisure opportunities and adding character and value to development sites, in addition to its general contribution to the image and identity of the Borough and the wider conurbation. There were a number of sites adjacent to the Tees within Stockton Borough which had the potential for further development to increase access to and use of the River. This report outlined a planned review of key sites being undertaken by SBC in conjunction with its key partners. It also updated on the arrangements to support access and enjoyment of the river corridor, including the River Users Group and the River Tees Rediscovered project.

The planned review of sites and opportunities was a focused and pragmatic piece of work to update existing plans, rather than a more comprehensive and definitive study. Subject to the effective input of partner agencies a further report would be presented to Cabinet later this calendar year.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and the scope of the proposed limited review of key sites and access opportunities along the Tees corridor within the Borough be endorsed

**CAB 53/16 Preston Park Museum & Grounds Update and Master Plan Development**

Consideration was given to a report that provided Members with an update on Preston Park Museum and the Master Plan Development.

Previous reports to Cabinet had set out in broad terms aspirations for the further development of Preston Park Museum & Grounds. Plans included the introduction of new elements within the ticketed areas of the attraction and general improvements to access and interpretation. There were also a range of challenges associated with financial targets and the need to generate additional income.

The report outlined the potential for increased income from admission charges and the later establishment of a membership scheme. The report also sought to finalise the process of establishing an independent external body at Preston Park Museum and Grounds (PPMG) to raise sponsorship and philanthropic giving to the Museum and Grounds.

A subsequent report would focus on developments in the wider Park and on the potential areas which could be funded by a Parks for People Heritage Lottery bid.

RESOLVED that

1. The increased museum admission charges as set out in option b) in the report be agreed and Cabinet support the further development of new membership schemes.
2. The establishment of the PPMG Foundation for the purpose of pursuing sponsorship and philanthropic giving for Preston Park Museum & Grounds be agreed.