

Cabinet

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday, 18th October, 2018.

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

Officers: Neil Schneider (CE), Julie Danks, Margaret Waggott, Peter Bell (DCE), Beccy Brown, Julie Butcher (HR&L), Garry Cummings (F&BS), Richard McGuckin (ED&D), Jamie McCann (CS), Reuben Kench (C,L&E).

Also in attendance: None.

Apologies: None.

CAB 65/18 **Welcome and Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and the evacuation procedure was noted.

CAB 66/18 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Bob Cook declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 6 – Minutes of Various Bodies as he was a Cabinet Member of TVCA.

Councillor Steve Nelson declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 9 - School Performance 2017-2018 as his grandchildren attended Frederick Natrass School and Northshore School.

Councillor Jim Beall declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 9 - School Performance 2017-2018 as his grandchildren attended Northfield School.

Councillor Norma Wilburn declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 9 - School Performance 2017-2018 as she was a governor at Stockton Riverside College.

Councillor Bob Cook declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 9 - School Performance 2017-2018 as his grandchildren attended Northfield School and he was on the Governing Body of two of the schools named within the report.

Councillor Mike Smith declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 9 - School Performance 2017-2018 as his grandchildren attended Northfield School and Roseberry Primary School and his daughter worked at Roseberry Primary School.

Councillor Jim Beall declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 13 – Director of Public Health Annual Report as he was a member of Roseworth Community Partnership.

CAB 67/18 **Minutes**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 27 September

2018.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2018 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

CAB 68/18 Openness of Local Government Bodies - Audio Recording of Council / Committee Meetings

Consideration was given to a report on the use of audio recording of all Council and committee meetings which was introduced in January 2016.

The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 assisted any members of the press and public who want to know about, view or report the work of local government bodies. The “press” was defined in the widest terms – including traditional print media, filming crews, hyper-local journalists and bloggers. The national rules had increased the rights to film, audio-record, take photographs, and use social media such as tweeting and blogging to report the proceedings of all such meetings that were open to the public.

Stockton had indeed benefited from a proactive local media presence at the majority of public meetings with the introduction of Local Democracy Reporters, who regularly report on local democracy issues.

It was acknowledged that in a modern, digital world where the use of modern communication methods such as filming, tweeting and blogging should be embraced for enhancing the openness and transparency of local government bodies. In accordance with these regulations all Councils had to allow any member of the public to take photographs, film and audio-record the proceedings, and report on all public meetings. In addition the Council was required to provide reasonable facilities to facilitate reporting for any member of the public who may wish to do so.

It was noted that the national rules similarly did not prevent Councillors from tweeting and blogging at meetings, which they should be allowed to do provided it was not disruptive and did not detract from the proper conduct of the meeting. Whilst Councillors were expected to comply with their body’s code of conduct, this should not prevent Councillors from tweeting or blogging when appropriate.

These regulations supported a strong, 21st century, local democracy where local government was genuinely accountable to the local people.

Stockton introduced the use of audio recording of all Council / Committee meetings in January 2016. The sole purpose for introducing the smartpens was to assist Governance Officers in the production of timely accurate minutes. Recordings were used to ensure the key points of the decision making process were effectively and accurately captured.

The smartpen had since been used at Council, Committee and other meetings with an announcement made by the Chair at the start of each meeting stating the reason why the recording was being made; e.g. to assist the Governance Officer at a later stage in compiling the minutes of the meeting.

It was acknowledged that the smartpens were introduced solely for the purpose of minute taking and that it was never the intention that the pens would act as recordings per se. However, in the time since the introduction of the smartpens, the availability of the audio recording had led to requests being made to obtain a copy of the recording, which had subsequently been provided on each occasion.

This had had a direct impact on the work of Governance Officers diverting resource away from the efficient and effective production of minutes to the consider requests for copies of recordings.

Requests can be received from different sources, in different ways and initially were discussed with the Council's Information Governance Team to understand the best way to deal with the request following which receipt of the enquiry was acknowledged. A decision was then subsequently made, often in consultation with the relevant service department, as to whether it was valid to provide the information requested. Should the request be regarded as valid, officers would respond to the enquiry, during which time consultation and approval of the release of the recording was obtained from the relevant Director and the reply sent out. In addition in some circumstances officers would need to advise the relevant committee members and officers of the release of the recording.

In the case of each of the audio recordings of Committee meetings provided to date, it had sometimes been necessary due to the size of memory of the recording, to provide a copy of the recording on disk rather than provide by e-mail. This had necessitated input from officers in Communications who had the appropriate software to convert the recording to disk. In all cases this inevitably diverts resource away from the preparation of the minutes.

It was recommended that the Council continues to support local democracy by continuing to provide reasonable facilities for members of the press and public who wish to continue to record public meetings.

Governance officers would continue to prepare minutes of all meetings that reflected the proceedings and the decision making process in an accurate and timely way as possible.

In conclusion it was felt that as a consequence of people requesting copies of the Councils audio recordings, resources required within the governance team for minute preparation had been diverted. Therefore given that the recordings had been used in a way contrary to the use intended i.e. to support the performance of Governance Officers in the preparation of accurate and timely minutes, and that press, public and Councillors were able to make their own recordings, Cabinet agreed to discontinue the use of audio recording all Council / Committee meetings.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The recording of public meetings be supported and continues to be permitted (excluding exempt information).
2. A minute taking service continues to be provided and the use of smartpens be discontinued.

**CAB
69/18** **Minutes of Various Bodies**

In accordance with the Council's Constitution or previous practice the minutes of the meeting of the body indicated below were submitted to members for consideration:-

Tees Valley Combined Authority Cabinet – 27 July 2018

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings detailed above be approved / received, as appropriate.

**CAB
70/18** **Open Water Safety Strategy**

Consideration was given to a report on Open Water Safety Strategy.

Following an increased focus on water safety and drowning prevention both nationally through the Local Government Association (LGA) Safer and Stronger Communities Board and regionally following a number of different incidents the report presented the Water Safety Strategy for the Borough of Stockton.

Services across the authority had worked together to develop the Water Safety Strategy and the initial Water Safety Plan in taking this work forward it was recommended that an operational working group was formed to ensure an on-going coherent approach and the support of wider stakeholders.

Proposed Membership of the Water Safety Operational Working Group was as follows:-

- Flood Risk Management Team
- Greenspace
- Community Services
- Health and Safety
- CaRT (Canals and Rivers Trust)
- RUG (River User Group)
- Operator
- Community Safety Partnership

In addition in order to enhance public awareness and improve the communication of water safety issues a specific web page had been developed to deliver key water safety messages.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The Water Safety Strategy and initial Water Safety Plan be endorsed and adopted.
2. The establishment of the Water Safety Operational Working Group be agreed.

**CAB
71/18**

Children's Services Progress Update: 2018/19 – Quarter 1 (April – June 2018)

Consideration was given to a report that provided a summary of performance across Children's Services for Quarter 1. It was based on the Children's Strategy priorities agreed by Cabinet in June 2017.

The report summarised performance information in relation to the Children's Services Strategy 2017-20. The strategy, agreed by Cabinet in June 2017, sets out the key priorities for Children's Services and the key performance indicators associated with delivery.

The update report was in three parts:

- a. Update on 2018/19 priorities.
- b. Update on other actions and progress against the wider strategy
- c. A summary of key points

An update on progress included:

- a. Further sessions on safeguarding and corporate parenting for members would be delivered this year.
- b. In line with the agreed regional approach and the formation of the regional Improvement Alliance, the Council would undertake a self-assessment across Children's services which would be peer challenged and reviewed by two other Councils before being considered as part of a regional improvement plan. Both the LGA and the Department for Education were also involved in the work.
- c. As part of the new Ofsted ILACS framework (Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services) the Council received an annual conversation with Ofsted. The outcomes of which were attached to the report.
- d. The Council was leading on the discussions to consider and develop new safeguarding arrangements as required by the Children and Social Work Act 2017. The Act provided for the abolition of LSCBs and their replacement with new locally developed arrangements. Initial proposals were being considered to explore closer working with Hartlepool Borough Council on a new safeguarding partnership. The proposal was that this would be launched in shadow form in December 2018, with a view to going live from 1 April 2019, well in advance of the deadline of 1 September 2019.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The report be noted.
2. The outcomes from the Annual Conversation with Ofsted be noted.

**CAB
72/18**

School Performance 2017-2018

Consideration was given report that presented a summary of provisional

headline performance data for the academic year 2017-18 in all Key Stages for all providers across the Borough.

There was a continued strong trajectory of improvement evident in performance of pupils in the primary phase. Of the 17 maintained schools inspected this year, 15 retained their good judgement, meaning that 95% maintained schools were good or better. This reflected the impact of the work of the Education Improvement Service in monitoring, challenging, intervening and supporting the sector.

Secondary outcomes had improved overall from 2017 to 2018, were above provisional 2018 national averages in all bar one measure, above 2017 national averages and with all Stockton headline measures comparing very favourably to those for other NE LAs. Within Stockton schools performance varies considerably.

Post-16 outcomes had been even further strengthened in school sixth forms whilst the two Stockton colleges had maintained improvements on many measures.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The standards and achievements across the Borough be noted.
2. The strong overall performance of Stockton schools at both primary and secondary phases be noted.

CAB 73/18 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Joint Commissioning Strategy

Consideration was given to a report on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Joint Commissioning Strategy.

The SEND Joint Commissioning Group had developed this 3 year shared strategy, involving partners from Children's Services, Adult Social Care, Public Health, Schools and Hartlepool & Stockton on Tees Clinical Commissioning Group. Parents, carers, children and young people had been integral to developing priorities for action. It had been informed by the SEND Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and was in line with the requirements of the SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years.

The SEND Joint Commissioning Group and this Strategy formed one work strand as part of a wider SEND vision and statement. The Strategy had been approved by the Health and Wellbeing Board and by the CCG's Executive. It was brought to Cabinet for endorsement by the Council as a key partner. The overarching Stockton Local Area SEND Vision and statement 2017-2020 would be brought to Cabinet at a future meeting.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The SEND Joint Commissioning Strategy be endorsed for approval.

2. The SEND Local Area Vision Statement be received at a future meeting.

**CAB
74/18** **Economic Climate Report**

Consideration was given to a report on the Economic Climate.

The report, and subsequent quarterly updates, provided Members with an update on information published in Stockton's Local Economic Assessment 2017 as well as key recent economic announcements.

The report was presented to Cabinet on a quarterly basis. The emphasis of each report focuses on a particular theme as follows:

- People – labour supply
- Place – key economic development locations
- Business – key sectors and businesses
- Economic Performance Summary Report and Economic Growth Plan monitoring

Each thematic report was presented in four sections:

- i. Economic Dashboard – presented a number of key indicators which were monitored at least quarterly, and included a position statement against the two indicators of growth relevant to the 'People' chapter
- ii. Updates – summarising key announcements and developments:
 - updates – announcements with implications across key sectors, the region and nationally
 - business announcements – announcements from some of the key businesses within the Borough
 - strategic locations – a brief update on any new development at strategic employment locations across the Borough
 - training & skills – provides an update on emerging news relating to skills needs and provision
- iii. Theme Review – An in depth focus, and the substantive part of the report, on key statistics affecting business, people or place. Most of the referenced statistics in the review are produced annually and cannot be updated quarterly.
- iv. Case Study – A relevant case study for the theme. For example, the 'Business' case study in the report focuses on the Chemical Industry in the Borough.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The report be noted.
2. The work being undertaken be supported.

CAB **Armed Forces Covenant**

Consideration was given to the Armed Forces Covenant.

The report provided details of the position and the progress that had been made since Cabinet considered a review of the Council's commitment to its Armed Forces Community Covenant (AFCC) in October 2017 and recommended the adoption of a revised Covenant.

In order to ensure that the Covenant-related activities and initiatives remained current and continue to support the local AF community, the Council would need to:

- continue to review the Defence Secretary's annual Armed Forces Covenant report to Parliament each December;
- continue to review the guidance provided to local authorities on the MOD's newly launched AF Covenant website;
- review the cross-Government 'Veterans' Strategy, which would be published November 2018.
- review the work of the Government's 'Armed Forces Covenant and Veterans' Board' which was launched in October 2017.
- review the Covenant-funded 'Map of Need' which was commissioned in April 2017 to provide an evidence-based analysis of what Veterans and Armed Forces families' services were being sought and where. The Council was awaiting its completion and publication. This may help to improve the profile of the local armed forces community and its needs.
- review the update of the SBC Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for veterans'.

By doing this the Council should be able to retain the Silver Award from the MOD ERS; begin to make progress towards the Gold Award; and continue working towards and maintaining a 'green' rating for delivery of the Covenant pillars.

The 100th Anniversary of Armistice Day was a fitting reminder of the debt the nation owed to the Armed Forces community. A number of projects and events to mark this historic occasion were being organised by the Council. This made it a very opportune time for the Council to commit itself to a new Armed Forces Covenant.

RESOLVED that an annual report be received highlighting the work being carried out to fulfil the commitments in the Armed Forces Community Covenant.

RECOMMENDED to Council that the revised Covenant to Full Council (replacing the original Covenant signed in 2012) be adopted.

Consideration was given to the Director of Public Health Annual Report.

The Director of Public Health Annual Report outlined some of the key health and wellbeing challenges and opportunities in Stockton Borough, including the data and evidence and details of current work and planned next steps.

Under the Health and Social Care Act (2012), the Director of Public Health in the Local Authority had a statutory duty to publish an independent report on the health of the population in their area; the Local Authority had a duty to publish the Report.

The Report was based on the JSNA and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2012-18, plus additional evidence from other sources and therefore had been developed through consultation with partners and communities. The focus of the Report was using 'community-centred approaches' to improve health and wellbeing in Stockton-On-Tees.

RECOMMENDED to Council that Director of Public Health Annual Report be agreed.