

## **Cabinet**

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday, 17th October, 2019.

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

**Officers:** Julie Danks (MD), Beccy Brown, Julie Butcher (HR&L), Garry Cummings (F&BS), Richard McGuckin (ED&D), Reuben Kench (C,L&E), Martin Gray (CS), Katie Needham (PH) Margaret Waggott, Peter Bell (DS).

**Also in attendance:** Cllr Luke Frost.  
Gavin Barker (Mazars).

**Apologies:** None.

### **CAB 43/19**

#### **Welcome and Evacuation Procedure**

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

### **CAB 44/19**

#### **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Bob Cook declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 7 - Reaccreditation for North East Charter Plus for Elected Member Development as he was a member of NEREO.

Councillor Ann McCoy declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 7 - Reaccreditation for North East Charter Plus for Elected Member Development as he was a member of NEREO.

Councillor Bob Cook declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 9 – Minutes of Various Bodies as he was a member of TVCA Cabinet.

Councillor Steve Nelson declared a personal pecuniary interest in respect of agenda item 10 - Support to the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector as he was a member of Catalyst.

Councillor Jim Beall declared a personal pecuniary interest in respect of agenda item 10 - Support to the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector as his wife was a director of Onsite Building Trust.

Councillor Ann McCoy declared a personal pecuniary interest in respect of agenda item 10 - Support to the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector as she was the Chair of SDAIS.

Councillor Jim Beall declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 14 - School Organisation Plan 2019 as he was a governor at Rosebrook School.

Councillor Bob Cook declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 14 - School Organisation Plan 2019 as he was a governor at Norton Primary School and Billingham South Primary School.

Councillor Bob Cook declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 15 - School Performance Report as he was a governor at Norton Primary School and Billingham South Primary School.

Councillor Mike Smith declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 15 - School Performance Report as his daughter worked at one of the schools named within the report.

Councillor Steve Nelson declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 15 - School Performance Report as he was a governor at Frederick Natrass School.

Councillor Jim Beall declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 15 - School Performance Report as he was a governor at Rosebrook School.

**CAB  
45/19**      **Minutes**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2019.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2019 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

**CAB  
46/19**      **Annual Audit Letter**

Consideration was given to a report on the Annual Audit Letter for 2018/19.

The external auditor, Mazars LLP, was required to present its findings following the completion of annual audit of the Council's and Group accounts to the Council's Cabinet.

A formal stage in the annual audit process was the production of the Annual Audit Letter. The Annual Audit Letter for 2018/19 had been received and was attached to the report.

The Annual Audit Letter summarised the auditor's findings from the 2018/19 audit. In line with previous practice, a copy of the Annual Audit Letter would be sent to all Members of the Council. Mazars LLP were required to submit the Annual Audit Letter to Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited and it would appear on their website in due course.

Mazars LLP had issued an unqualified audit opinion on the Council's and Groups financial statements for 2018/19 and in their opinion they;

- give a true and fair view of the Council and Group's financial position as at 31 March 2019 and of the Council and Group expenditure and income for the year then ended; and
- have been prepared properly in accordance with the CIPFA / LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2018/19.

Mazars LLP had issued an unqualified value for money conclusion stating that in all significant respects the “the Council had put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2019”.

The letter set out a ‘Forward Look’ in which future financial and operational challenges, many of them national, were highlighted. It stated that:-

“The position beyond 2019/20 is very uncertain as much depends on the outcome of the comprehensive spending review, fair funding review and the measures that will be taken in relation to the future operation of the business rates system. However, it seems unlikely that the overall financial position for the Council will improve sufficiently to allow it to defer any of the difficult decisions needed. Decisive action to bridge the budget gap over the medium term is a key priority for the Council.”

The Code of Audit Practice required Mazars to consider whether information published alongside the financial statements was consistent with those statements and their knowledge and understanding of the Council. In their opinion, the other information in the Statement of Accounts is consistent with the audited financial statements.

## **CAB 47/19 Corporate Peer Review**

Consideration was given to a report on the outcome of the recent LGA Corporate Peer Challenge.

Councils were increasingly looking for good practice, support and challenge to help them improve services for users. The Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) provided by the LGA is improvement-focussed and tailored to meet the council’s individual needs. CPC’s were designed to complement and add value to a council’s own performance and improvement focus through challenge and shared learning.

The CPC for Stockton was conducted by a team of elected members and senior officers from other local authorities, together with advisors from the LGA between 3rd and 6th September 2019.

Corporate peer reviews cover five core themes, all of which were underpinning features of good performance. The core themes were as follows:-

- a) Understanding of the local place and priority setting - Does the council understand its local context and place and use that to inform a clear vision and set of priorities.
- b) Leadership of Place - Does the council provide effective leadership of place through its elected members, officers and constructive relationships and partnerships with external stakeholders.
- c) Financial planning and viability - Does the council have a financial plan in place to ensure long term viability and is there evidence that it is being implemented successfully.
- d) Organisational leadership and governance - Is there effective political and managerial leadership supported by good governance and decision-

making arrangements that respond to key challenges and enable change and transformation to be implemented.

e) Capacity to deliver - Is organisational capacity aligned with priorities and does the council influence, enable and leverage external capacity to focus on agreed outcomes.

It was important to note that the CPC process was designed to be proportionate and flexible, furthermore the Council can agree one / two additional areas to include in the review that reflected local needs and requirements. Therefore in addition to the core themes Stockton requested the Peer Challenge team's views on:

- How well are we currently addressing health inequality
- How open we are to inclusive growth
- How can we address our recycling performance

The Peer team began the process by reviewing the information submitted in the self-assessment, including a number of the council's key documents. They visited the council for 4 days and conducted site visits, interviews and workshops. During the time the Peer team spent at Stockton they met with a wide selection of staff, councillors, stakeholders and partners, 195 people in total.

The Peer team presented their findings on the last day of their visit, feedback was provided on the basis of critical friends, not as assessors, consultants or inspectors.

The peer team's findings although focused on areas recommended for improvement, they also acknowledged that there was so much for the Council to be proud of. The headlines in the feedback were as follows:

- The pride, passion and commitment of staff and elected members has absolutely shone through in our discussions
- The customer service ethos and focus on the residents that sit at the heart of this – reflected in customer satisfaction levels and awards
- The way in which the organisation values, respects and invests in its people
- The strength of leadership that has been shown in relation to a number of projects focused on deriving a range of benefits – place-shaping and regeneration, social, economic, commercial
- The highly valued arts and events programme including the Stockton International Riverside Festival
- The way the authority has successfully managed the financial challenges to date – being both prudent and creative
- Being highly valued and very well respected as a partner
- Demonstrating pragmatism and an 'open mind' in relation to approaches to service delivery – a 'mixed economy'

The following were the Peer team's key recommendations to the council. They were suggested in the context of a high performing council:

- Develop a shared narrative of 'place' that is politically led
- Review what the Locality Forums are achieving and whether something

different is required

- Build on the process that we have been involved in so as to generate dialogue, forge links between people and organisations and stimulate thinking
- Continue to work to understand and address the causes of demand pressures being experienced repeatedly in-year and leading to projected overspends
- Ensure the process to recruit a Managing Director is seen to be open, transparent and competitive
- Build on the introduction of 'Informal Cabinet' and the work that has started to enable the Corporate Management Team to have a greater strategic focus
- Determine whether to take the opportunity we have outlined to move the council to the next level
- Create a shared narrative about the council and its role that is politically led
- Seize the chance to fulfil a real place leadership role around health inequalities and accelerate and enhance partnership working
- Establish a shared understanding of inclusive growth across the council and partners and enable greater dialogue both between them and within the authority
- Show political leadership on the issue of recycling and use the courage of your convictions to secure longer-term benefit
- Create a shared narrative about the council and its role that is politically led

Members and officers had the opportunity to reflect on the Peer Challenge team's findings and to determine how to take things forward, with a view to agreeing a robust action plan in response to these findings.

The Council would publish the findings from the Corporate Peer Challenge process, and would commit to a follow up visit, which would be light touch no sooner than two years on from the original challenge. This would enable us to demonstrate the impact of the peer challenge and the progress made against the areas of improvement identified.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The recommendations resulting from the recent LGA Corporate Peer Challenge be approved.
2. An action plan be developed in response to the Corporate Peer Review.

**CAB  
48/19**

### **Reaccreditation for North East Charter Plus for Elected Member Development**

Consideration was given to a report that summarised the recent 'light touch' inspection which resulted in the Authority being Reaccredited Charter Plus Status for Member Development by the LGA.

The North East Charter Plus for Elected Member Development sets out standards for local authorities that ensure they have a clear commitment to develop and support elected members, which benefited not only councillors

individually but ensuring that elected members were better placed to serve their local communities. In May 2012 the Authority achieved North East Charter Plus Status for Elected Member Development, having earlier met Charter Status standards in 2007, becoming only the second local authority in the region to do so. In 2016 the Authority was reassessed and accredited the award again.

A further reassessment took place on 2 September 2019 and North East Regional Employers Organisation and Member Peer, who carry out the assessment process on behalf of the LGA, suggested it would be a fairly 'light touch inspection', given our proven track record in meeting the required criteria and initial discussion held with the verification team regards the direction our approach to Member Development had taken since the last assessment. The assessment therefore lasted one day and consisted of a review of supporting evidence alongside informal discussions led by their Associate Jill Rouse and LGA Member Peer Malcolm Brain from Gateshead MBC with Members and officers.

The evidence provided for the assessment highlighted the significant investment in support for Members by the Authority and the breadth of learning and development opportunities made available to Members to build their capacity and take on greater responsibilities. This included the Member Induction Pack incorporating the Member Induction Programme that all Members received upon election, the report assessing the Member Briefing Sessions Programme for 2018/19 and setting the 2019/20 programme, along with the following case studies:

- Investment in Member ICT;
- Development into Role of Cabinet Member;
- Health & Wellbeing;
- Support for our Armed Forces Community;
- Scrutiny of Safeguarding;
- Licensing E-Learning.

In their assessment report submitted shortly after their inspection, the assessors highlighted their key findings as follows:-

- i) The Authority had demonstrated that it had a clear commitment to councillor development; a commitment reinforced by both the Managing Director and the Leader of the Council, and by the all-party Members Advisory Panel (MAP) which had continued to review on a regular basis the Member Learning & Development Strategy presenting it to both Corporate Management Team (CMT) and ultimately Cabinet for approval.

The process for identifying priorities in Member Learning & Development was found to have links to the Council's overall corporate priorities through a two-way process between MAP and CMT. Specific topics were explored in greater detail if required, not least for example the recent refresh of ICT provision for elected members which was overseen by an all party Members ICT Task & Finish Group established by MAP.

The Authority's continuing commitment to supporting members was further evidenced by additional officer resource added to the Member Development Section in order to deliver the comprehensive Member Induction Programme

post elections, and to continue to assist members in their use of technology as the refresh of Members ICT equipment is rolled out.

ii) The Authority had shown itself to have a strategic approach to Member Development, a process overseen by members themselves which had seen a recent review undertaken of the content of the Member Induction Programme, and the need for a comprehensive refresh of Members ICT. National research had been considered by members when formulating their strategic approach and investment in national learning programmes had continued with several members having accessed LGA Leadership Activity Programmes including Planning, Adult Social Care and the generic Leadership Academy, as well as being given individual support according to their needs.

Reference was made to the new Assistant Cabinet Member roles with a case study provided demonstrating how one member had been assisted in making the transition from scrutiny member to scrutiny chair; to then Assistant Cabinet Member and then Cabinet Member.

The Authority had also shown a desire to regularly review legislation and key policies upon which monthly briefings would be provided to members, with members having the opportunity to influence the Policy Briefing programme.

iii) The Authority successfully demonstrated that its learning development had been effective in building capacity, as evidenced by the evaluation taken by MAP of the Member Induction Programme which found that the training delivered had been extremely worthwhile.

Particular reference was made to the benefits shown of the Authority continually seeking to review its approach to Member Development which had led to IT provision and training being improved, the E-Learning offer expanded, the beneficial impact of mandatory training in specific areas of activity, and how valued by members was the availability of one to one support and the opportunity to identify their own Personal Support Plan.

Having reviewed all of the evidence presented, and having had the opportunity to hear from senior, long serving and newly elected members, as well as the Interim Managing Director, Assistant Director and senior officers from within Democratic Services, it was the view of the verifiers that this Council continued to meet the standards set down in the North East Charter for Member Development.

It was recognised that the Authority had a genuine culture of learning and development amongst its elected members, which had been shown to produce real positive outcomes that had benefitted from continuous review and quest for improvement as demonstrated by its recent comprehensive Member Induction Programme and its commitment to a refresh of Members ICT.

The verifiers noted the following views expressed by interviewees during the assessment:-

- Ensure good access to the E-Learning offer;
- Expand the E-casework facility and integrate it better with Council

systems;

- Empower Members to use technology to do more for themselves;
- Continue to encourage more Members to participate in development activity and having a PSP;
- Expand the mandatory training input for new Members.

It was noted also that it was timely post Induction at the start of the Council term and with 13 newly elected members on the Council, for officers and members to review its communication and consultation protocols as currently set out in its Concordat for Consultation with Elected Members.

This verification visit also coincided with the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge which took place during the same week. Feedback from this particular review supports the conclusions arising from Charter Plus reaccreditation as the Peer Challenge Team specifically noted that:-

“There is a very impressive and comprehensive approach to elected member learning and development which has been externally validated and provides a potential model for others”

The Charter Plus verifiers identified the following two areas for improvement that they would like to see the Council consider in the future, both of which closely reflected improvements that had been suggested by interviewees during the assessment:-

- i) The Council include the Equality and Diversity course in the group of mandatory courses and that all members be required to undertake this training. It was noted during the assessment feedback that Equality & Diversity had been provided as non-mandatory training as part of the Induction Programme but that it had been poorly attended, which had led to further repeat sessions being planned. The verifiers noted that Equality & Diversity was considered to be part of every Learning & Development opportunity, but suggested that it may be appropriate for some stand-alone elements of this training to be rolled out in the form of mandatory training so as to engage more members;
- ii) The impetus of the IT and E-learning offers be maintained and the roll out to engage all Members continue. This is likely to require ongoing monitoring and further evaluation by MAP/Senior Officers.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The positive outcome of the Council's reaccreditation as achieving LGA Member Development Charter Plus Status be noted.
2. The recommendations and further action suggested as part of the verification report.

**CAB  
49/19**

### **Procurement Plan - Higher Value Contracts**

Consideration was given to a report that sought approval for the procurement of a number of planned higher value contracts, where the value exceeds the limit on officer delegated authority, but which were funded within the approved



MTFP.

The Council had a well-established practice of good forward planning of procurement that ensured adequate resources and sufficient time was dedicated to the process to ensure service outcomes and value for money were achieved. There was an ongoing requirement to manage a pipeline of contract renewals and new contracts for services, goods or works that support service delivery.

As part of the update to the constitution a succinct scheme of officer delegation and committee terms of reference were agreed. These changes had simplified and streamlined the approach to decision making by removing the many differing decision making routes associated with individual functions. The constitution more clearly defined a range of decisions that required a specific Cabinet approval, the financial threshold for which was set at a level of £500k or more.

Annex 1 of the report listed the procurement projects over £500k that were underway and due for award. The value of the individual contracts each exceeded the revised officer delegation limit approved by Council as part of the new constitution May 2019.

By approving the procurements in this way, there would be no further requirement for officers to obtain a separate cabinet approval for each individual contract. It was intended that this approach would streamline Cabinet input and ensure focus on contracts that were significant, higher value or whose award would be a key decision.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The procurement of the projects listed in Annex 1 be approved.
2. The relevant Director or Assistant Director be given authority to make the specific contract award decisions in accordance with the delegations listed in Annex 1.

**CAB**      **Minutes of Various Bodies**  
**50/19**

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

Tees Valley Combined Authority Cabinet – 26 July 2019  
Safer Stockton Partnership – 16 July 2019  
Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board – 23 September 2019

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings detailed in the appendices be received.

**CAB**      **Support to the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector**

Consideration was given to a report on the Council's approach to providing ongoing support to the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector in the borough.

The borough was fortunate to benefit from a strong and thriving VCSE sector. There were approximately 800 active VCSE organisations in the borough, delivering huge value and support across a wide range of areas to the residents of the borough.

The Council valued the work of the voluntary, charitable and social enterprise organisations in the borough and the many people who dedicated their time and energy in the sector. The Council had a long track record of supporting the sector in the borough and was committed to helping it thrive and prosper. The approach had always combined both direct financial support with support through collaborative partnership working and strong relationships. As part of this commitment the Council had historically reviewed, and reported through Cabinet, the support it provided on a regular basis in order to ensure it remained fit for purpose in line with the Council Plan objective to "support the continued development of a strong and vibrant VCSE sector". The last report was considered by Cabinet in 2016 and it was considered timely to review the approach as the funding agreement with Catalyst (the key partner in providing support to the sector) comes to an end in 2019.

The Council adopted a comprehensive approach to support for the VCSE sector which was built on a platform of support delivered through the charitable organisation - Catalyst and a small Community Engagement team within the Council. This model had proved to be successful for a number of years and retained strong support from across the sector.

The Council continued to provide core funding to Catalyst to support its work as the strategic infrastructure organisation for the borough. Catalyst was established in 2007 through a partnership project between the VCSE and the Council. The concept was to create an overarching body that could act to further the impact, reputation and opportunities of the VCSE in the Borough. It did this through providing specialist support on matters such as organisational governance, funding advice (which includes facilitating new strategic funds and opportunities), bespoke training, support catered to the VCSE's needs and networking opportunities for regular and meaningful dialogue with funders and public sector commissioners. Catalyst also managed a number of infrastructure projects such as Stockton Volunteers. The successful Community Programme which was wide range of Forums, networks and meetings that brought together local VCSE organisations and public sector partners offer an opportunity for VCSE organisations and individuals to:

- a. Participate in the sector
  - b. Influence strategic decisions in the borough
  - c. Exchange ideas/information and promote best practice
  - d. Build relationships and partnerships
- And,
- e. Promote their organisations or projects to the wider VCSE Sector

The infrastructure model in place in Stockton had served the sector and the

local authority well and was recognised as a model of good practice elsewhere. Locally and regionally the traditional models of voluntary development agencies had continued to decline and, in many instances, had ceased to exist with authorities reducing or ceasing core funding. However, the Council's ongoing support through core funding and close working relationships and regular communication had seen the model continue to thrive. The Cabinet Member for Access, Communities and Community Safety had a role on the Catalyst Board and members of the Catalyst team work closely with Council officers in the Community Engagement team. Further information on Catalyst's work was provided in the Catalyst Annual Review attached to the report.

The decision to provide core funding to Catalyst to support the sector was complemented by the Council's investment in the Community Engagement team. The team worked closely with Catalyst and also facilitated the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). They supported the LSP in its work to deliver the Bright Borough for All Strategy to tackle poverty. They do this through delivery of the annual LSP event to agree priorities and then through support to the four Locality Forums and the two LSP thematic groups (the Infinity Partnership and the Housing, Neighbourhood and Affordable Warmth Partnership). The team also provided support to the network of 36 Community Centres across the borough, working closely with Onsite Building Trust. They oversee the use of the Market Development Fund which could be used support sustainability in the VCSE sector. Facilitate and support the Bright Minds, Big Futures initiative to engage with young people across the borough. They also maintained strong relationships with individuals and organisations across the sector and work in conjunction with Catalyst to create strong and joined-up working. The team's involvement in the Catalyst-run Forums provided a valuable interface between the sector and the Council.

Whilst the Catalyst / Council partnership outlined above forms the basis of the support to the sector the report detailed the many other ways the Council built on this foundation to provide ongoing support to the sector.

It was proposed that as the current approach served the sector, the Council and enabled joint working for the benefit of the people of the borough that the Council continued to provide support to the VCSE sector with an ongoing commitment to the joint Catalyst / Council model underpinning the range of additional support activities outlined in paragraph 6 of the report.

To support this model, it was proposed that a new 5-year partnership contract be agreed with Catalyst for £97,000 core funding p.a. It was proposed that the current 3-year agreement be replaced with a longer 5-year agreement as this better reflected the long-term partnership relationship between the two organisations and allowed for longer term planning.

It was also proposed that a one-off additional commitment be made for 2019/20 to Catalyst to support the new Stockton Borough Asylum Seeker & Refugee Forum. The new group sought to provide a forum for the co-ordination of the many VCSE organisations who were providing support to asylum seekers and refugees in the borough. It was anticipated that the forum would add great value to the work of the separate organisations and had plans to undertake some joint work on a directory of services and support following the change of asylum housing providers. The additional funding would support the employment of a part-time member of staff for one year to set-up and run the forum and some of

the initial activities of the group. It was anticipated that following the initial set-up year the forum could be supported alongside the other Catalyst-run forums through the normal funding arrangements.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The overall approach to VCSE Sector support as outlined in the report be approved.
2. The ongoing financial and partnership commitment to Catalyst to support the organisation in its work to provide the voice, representation and support for Stockton-on-Tees' VCSE sector be approved.
3. The commitment of one-off additional support to Catalyst for the establishment of a new Asylum Seeker and Refugee Forum be approved.

**CAB  
52/19**      **Economic Climate Update**

Consideration was given to a report that provided an update on key economic and business announcements.

Members were being presented with this report to provide them with relevant and timely information in relation to the local 'Place' specific economic conditions as they relate to Stockton-on-Tees.

The Economic Climate Update reports were presented to Cabinet quarterly and themed by either 'Business', 'People' or 'Place'.

The structure of the report was streamlined for ease of interpretation and reference; however more details were available and could be accessed via the hyperlinks included at various points of the report.

The report was presented in sections as follows:

- i. Headlines – a graphical update on the latest estimates and data trends associated with Stockton-on-Tees as a place;
- ii. Summary – a useful narrative of the key economic statistics for Stockton-on-Tees;
- iii. Updates – headlines from recent strategic and business announcements.
- iv. Case Study – a look at the local economic importance of Low Carbon and Renewable Energy

**CAB  
53/19**      **Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2019**

Consideration was given to a report that outlined how the Local Authority (LA) was meeting its duty to secure sufficient childcare and included information about the supply of and demand for childcare, details on any gaps in provision and an action plan on how they would be addressed.

The Childcare Act 2006 and 2016 and the associated statutory guidance for local authorities on Early Education and Childcare June 2018, required

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (the Local Authority) to secure sufficient childcare, as far as was reasonably practicable and within available resources, for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0 – 14 (or up to 18 for disabled children).

To secure sufficient childcare places, local authorities should take into account:

- what is 'reasonably practicable' when assessing what sufficient childcare means for their area;
- the state of the local childcare market, including the demand for specific types of providers, in a particular locality and the amount and type of supply that currently exists;
- the state of the labour market including the sufficiency of the local childcare workforce;
- the quality and capacity of childcare providers and childminders registered with a childminder agency, including their funding, staff, premises, experience and expertise;
- should encourage schools in their area to offer out-of-hours childcare from 8.00am until 6.00pm and in school holidays;
- should encourage existing providers to expand their provision and new providers to enter the local childcare market; and
- should encourage providers to take sustainable business approach to planning and signpost providers to resources to support them.

The Local Authority was required by legislation to maintain a service that provided information, to parents and prospective parents on the provision of childcare in their area, as listed in Schedule 1 of the Childcare Act 2006 and from 1 September 2017 publish this information electronically on the local authority website and update it at a minimum termly on 1 January, 1 April and 1 September, ensuring parents are aware of:

- Early education places for two, three and four year olds;
- The option to continue to take up their child's 15 hour early education place until their child reaches compulsory school age;
- How to identify high quality provision in their area.

The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment provided information on how the Local authority was meeting its legal duty.

Take-up of universal 3 & 4 year places continued to be high with 100% take-up and 30 hour free childcare places for working parents of 3 & 4 year olds had increased by 27% since the last report was produced in 2018.

Stockton continued to maintain a high percentage take-up of 2 year funded places; on average the termly take-up is around 90%. A table on page 19 of the assessment showed the take-up at a ward level basis. The number of children eligible was provided by the Department for Work and Pensions, by the time this data was received it was already out of date, a number of families would have already moved address, and this was the main reason why take-up was lower in some wards. Families may also decide not to take-up a place as they preferred to look after their child at home.

There were 1,401 recorded vacancies in registered provision. Vacancies were

monitored on a termly basis to ensure there were sufficient places available for parents. If there was a significant reduction in places steps would be taken to ensure parents had access to alternative places in close proximity to either work or home. When new providers enter the market the assessment was used to inform them of any gaps in childcare at a ward level basis. Also, if there was a need, the authority would work with providers to offer additional places by either increasing number of places or opening new settings.

The percentage ward take-up of childcare was dependent on whether a parent required childcare close to home; close to work; or at a provider of choice, therefore some wards would be reporting over 100% take-up.

Childcare costs in Stockton were lower than regional and national charges, especially for childminders. Funded childcare was available for children aged 2, 3 & 4 years old and tax free childcare was available which covered 20% of the cost of childcare for working parents with children aged 0-12 years.

In regards to quality of provision the majority (92%) of provision in Stockton was rated good or outstanding, although this percentage had decreased in comparison to 2018 and was lower than the regional percentage for 2019 (97%). However, with the continued support of the Early Years team this percentage had already increased and would increase again as settings were re-inspected.

Stockton-on-Tees had a good range of quality childcare across the borough, however specific priorities had been identified and will be addressed.

## **CAB 54/19 Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) Local Area Inspection**

Consideration was given to a report on Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) Local Area Inspection.

The Children and Families Act 2014 introduced significant changes to the systems and approaches for children and young people aged 0-25 with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In 2016 an inspection framework was introduced to assess the effectiveness of local areas in fulfilling their statutory duties and in identifying and meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND. This framework required that all local areas would be inspected by 2021.

The Stockton Local Area Inspection took place in February 2019. The key outcome of the inspection was that a Written Statement of Action would be required to address issues identified. This was submitted on 12 August 2019.

The report outlined the key issues in the inspection, the content of the Written Statement of Action and next steps.

Although there were many positive findings from the inspection, as detailed in the report at Annex 1, the key outcome was that a written statement of action was required because of significant areas of weakness in the local area's practice.

The local authority and the area's clinical commissioning group were jointly responsible for submitting the written statement to Ofsted.

The areas of focus for the Written Statement of Action (WSOA) were:

- Coproduction, engagement and communication with parents are underdeveloped;
- The quality of EHC assessments and plans is too variable;
- Strategic joint commissioning, in a way that demonstrably improves EHC provision and outcomes for children, young people and families, is not fully embedded;
- Local area leaders have not developed an effective approach to measuring and evaluating EHC outcomes for children and young people.

The Local Authority, Parent/Carer representatives, the CCG, schools and settings, and Stockton Public Health, had worked together to develop the Written Statement of Action (WSOA).

Partners had focused on developing a clear and integrated set of actions which address the four key areas of weakness as identified.

The co-production and strategic joint commissioning actions were very closely linked, and relate to a set of principles and approaches for how local partners would continue to work together and develop future services, with the emphasis on co-production as the method by which this would be achieved.

There were a number of agencies who could provide some assistance to the work on co-production including Catalyst and Contact (who had been commissioned nationally by DfE to support in this area).

Quality of education, health and care plans and a bigger focus on outcomes were also closely related, and partners had made a commitment to develop and implement a new format and approach to EHCPs which included a stronger focus on outcomes, and was linked to a refreshed quality assurance process. This would also enable more detailed data to be collected about outcomes across the system to, in turn, inform further co-production and commissioning.

The details of the WSOA, which had been approved by Ofsted and CQC, were included in Annex 2 of the report.

The SEN Strategic Group had the strategic oversight of the work relating to SEND. Since November 2018 the membership of the group had been refreshed and the group's strategic role emphasised. The group was co-chaired by the local authority Director of Children's Services, and the Head of Commissioning and Strategy (CCG). Other membership was drawn from those who were leading each aspect of the strategic plan – Children's Services, Public Health and the CCG, as well as representatives from social care and the Parent Carer Forum.

The SEN Strategic Group provided support and challenge across partner agencies in respect of duties and responsibilities for SEND and promoted joint and partnership working. It would also monitor the implementation of the

WSOA.

**CAB  
55/19**      **School Organisation Plan 2019**

Consideration was given to a report on the School Organisation Plan 2019.

Although the statutory requirement to publish an annual School Organisation Plan was abolished in 2004, the Council had continued to publish an updated plan to inform schools, parents and the general public. The Plan gave information about the number, types and sizes of schools maintained by the Council, Academies and Free Schools. It recorded the number of places available in those schools and it included forecasts of pupil numbers over the next five years. This information was an important resource to support the Council in carrying out its statutory duty to ensure a sufficient supply of school places to meet the needs of children and young people in the borough.

When taken together with documents relating to the condition of school buildings and their suitability for purpose, the information in this plan may help to inform decisions about capital investment in existing or new school buildings.

The 'School Organisation Plan 2019' described three specific issues to be confronted over the next five years:

- Rising numbers of four-year-olds starting school;
- The beginning of the end of falling numbers in our secondary schools;
- Uncertainty over the impact of Academies and possible Free Schools.

The draft plan was attached to the report.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The information in the draft plan be noted.
2. The pressure in demand for secondary school places be noted.
3. The School Organisation Plan 2019 be published on the Council website and made available to partner organisations.

**CAB  
56/19**      **School Performance Report**

Consideration was given to a report that presented a summary of provisional, un-validated headline performance data for the academic year 2018 – 19 in all Key Stages for all providers across the Borough.

Primary schools continued to perform well. 93% of schools were good or better (including previous judgements of schools not inspected since academy conversion). This was above average for the region and for England. This reflected the sustained impact of the work of the Education Improvement Service in monitoring, challenging, intervening and supporting the sector, including work with a significant proportion of academies who buy these services. Outcomes for pupils in the primary sector were above provisional



national average for 2019 on every measure.

Secondary outcomes had improved overall from 2018 to 2019, were above 2018 national averages for all but one measure (% achieving the English Baccalaureate). Once again all Stockton headline measures compare very favourably to those for other NE LAs. As in 2019 Stockton schools performance varies considerably between secondary schools.

Stockton post-16 providers had maintained an A level pass rate in line with the national average (98%) overall. The % of students achieving 3 A levels at AAB+ in facilitating subjects increased substantially for some providers though declined for others. Reflecting a national decrease, the % of students achieving A\*-B grades at A level had declined and was below the national average. Progress scores would not be available until mid-academic year.

## **CAB      Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG) Report 2019**

**57/19**

Consideration was given to a report on Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG) 2019.

Climate Change was once again growing in prominence, both in the awareness of the general public and in the media. The Council had a strong track record and had demonstrated significant performance in contributing to tackling the issue and in reducing net emissions of greenhouse gases since Local Authority reporting began in 2009, and had been recognised nationally for the work on energy efficiency and carbon reduction. Under the voluntary 'Emissions Reduction Pledge 2020' which the Council committed to in 2018, the Council was required to submit a Greenhouse Gas Emissions report detailing all direct and indirect emissions from Council activity to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) in October each year, and report performance against a voluntary emissions target of 30% reduction on a 2009/10 baseline.

The annual report was attached to the report and highlighted that in 2018/19 the Council had performed extremely well once more, reducing the net emissions by 11.5% in 12 months to a total of 15,824 tonnes per annum. This was a reduction of 50.1% (or 15,867 tonnes) on the 2009/10 baseline and therefore the Council had significantly exceeded the challenging target set by BEIS. Since the Council adopted the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan in January 2016 the Council had reduced the emissions from sources that were owned or controlled directly by 40.2%, and this was the sixth year in a row that the emissions activity had shown a decrease in a 12 month period.

Subsequently the Council had also made significant financial savings as a result, with combined financial savings / cost of avoidance of £166,804 in the last financial year, in addition to £553k in 2017/18 and £399k saved in 2016/17, totalling over £1.1m. As projects such as the LED street lighting replacement programme continued to deliver real benefits and savings, and the adopted Climate Change Strategy continued to be delivered, the Council would achieve strategy targets and the challenge of a 30% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from Council activity by March 2020.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The positive performance in reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases from Council activity in 2018/19, and associated financial savings be noted.
2. The continued efforts to reduce emissions via a range of activities be supported.

**CAB  
58/19**

**Annual Report of the Director of Public Health 2018/19**

Consideration was given to the Annual Report of the Director of Public Health 2018/19.

The Annual Report of the Director of Public Health outlined some of the key health and wellbeing challenges and opportunities in Stockton Borough, including data, local intelligence, evidence and examples of on-going work with recommendations for next steps. The 2018/19 report titled “Lonely? Get Connected’ focused specifically on the local public health issue of loneliness.

The Director of Public Health had a statutory duty to write an Annual Public Health Report (APHR) and the Local Authority had a statutory duty to publish the independent report on the health of the local community.

The 2018/19 report began by providing an overview of the health and wellbeing of Stockton-on-Tees residents with a particular focus on health inequalities. The report then took a specific look at the public health issue of loneliness in the Borough. It explored what was known about ‘who’ was lonely and the impact on their health and wellbeing, shares some examples of local work being delivered which addresses loneliness and then explored a range of solutions and recommendations for consideration. The final chapter outlined progress on the recommendations of the previous APHR.

**RECOMMENDED to Council that the Annual Report of the Director of Public Health 2018/19 be endorsed.**