

Cabinet

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday, 15th October, 2020.

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

Officers: Julie Danks, Margaret Waggott, Nigel Hart (MD), Beccy Brown, Jonathan Nertney (HR&L), Garry Cummings(F,D&BS), Martin Gray (CHS), Reuben Kench (CL&E), Jamie McCann (CS), Richard McGuckin (TC), Ann Workman (AH).

Also in attendance: Cllrs Baldock, Faulks, Frost, Gamble, Hall, Moore, Sherri, Stephenson O.B.E., Walmsley, Mrs Walmsley and Woodhouse

Apologies: N/A

CAB 18/20 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillors Cook and Stephenson each declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in respect of the item entitled Minutes of Various Bodies as a result of their respective roles on the Tees Valley Combined Authority.

Councillor Nelson declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in respect of the item entitled 'Investing in our Town Centres' as a result of his membership of Thirteen, who were referred to indirectly during consideration of the item. Councillor Cooke also declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in respect of the same item as a result of being a member of the Thornaby Town Deal Board referred to within the report.

CAB 19/20 **Minutes of the Meeting held on 17th September 2020 - For Signature/Approval**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 17th September 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

CAB 20/20 **Minutes of Various Bodies**

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

Tees Valley Combined Authority Cabinet – 24th July 2020
Tees Adult Safeguarding Board - 22nd September 2020

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

CAB 21/20 **Customer Service Excellence**

Cabinet were invited to note the outcomes of the Council's recent Customer Service Excellence review, along with proposed changes in categories for the

Annual Staff Awards.

Customer Service Excellence is a national quality mark that seeks to reward organisations that demonstrate a customer-focused commitment to all that they do. Certification to the Customer Service Excellence standard is through a rigorous assessment process which includes a review of documents that demonstrate compliance against each element of the standard and an on-site visit to observe practical evidence.

There are 5 criteria that must be satisfied with a number of elements within each. Compliance plus is awarded for elements where particular strength is demonstrated.

Accreditation operates on a 3-year cycle, with a full assessment in year 1 followed up by 2 annual reviews to ensure standards are maintained. Stockton Council has been accredited with Customer Service Excellence since 2010 and has demonstrated continuous improvement through the assessment cycle. In the 2019 full assessment, the Council was awarded full accreditation with compliance plus in 13 elements.

The 12 month review took place in July 2020. Due to COVID19 the approach was quite different and documentary evidence was submitted in the usual way but all meetings with the assessor were conducted over Microsoft Teams. Staff from a range of Council services contributed supporting evidence and participated in review meetings with the assessor.

Cabinet were therefore pleased to note that the Council had retained full certification, achieving full compliance across all 57 aspects of assessment with compliance plus for 17 elements, 4 of which are in addition to the 13 achieved last year. The assessor was particularly impressed with the Council's response to the COVID pandemic and commented on the passion and dedication of the staff, the responsiveness to customer needs and the partnership working.

It was therefore appropriate at this point in time to review the Council's Annual Staff Awards for Customer Service Excellence, as it provided a great opportunity to recognise and celebrate the successes of staff and included awards in a number of categories. This year the usual categories have been streamlined to allow for the addition of an apprenticeship award and two special categories to recognise the outstanding contributions of staff during the unprecedented challenges we've faced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**CAB
22/20**

Local Authority Governor Appointments

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 following nominations, as amended at the meeting, to school / academy Governing Bodies:-

- Durham Lane Primary School - Maureen Rigg
- Mill Lane Primary School - Linda Lyngard
- Myton Park Primary School - Simon Milner

RESOLVED that the above appointment be made to the vacant Governorships subject to successful List 99 check and Personal Disclosure.

**CAB
23/20**

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Consideration was given to the annual Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report for 2019/20. The report detailed all direct and indirect emissions from Council activity, as well as performance against a voluntary emissions target of 30% reduction on a 2009/10 baseline, and was required for submission to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

The issue of Climate Change continues to grow in prominence, both in the awareness of the general public and in the media as a result of government policy drivers such as the adoption of a statutory 'Net Zero' emissions target, and public campaigns such as the Climate Emergency. The Council had a strong track record in this regard and had demonstrated significant performance in contributing to tackling the issue and in reducing our net emissions of greenhouse gases since Local Authority reporting began in 2009. The Council's efforts had also been recognised nationally for our work on energy efficiency and carbon reduction.

The report highlighted that in 2019/20, the Council had performed extremely well once more, reducing our net emissions by 15.1% in the last 12 months to a total of 13,435 tonnes per annum. This is a reduction of 57.6% (or 18,256 tonnes) on the 2009/10 baseline and therefore the Council had significantly exceeded the challenging target set by BEIS. Since it had adopted its Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan in January 2016, the Council had helped reduce the emissions from sources that are owned or controlled directly by us by 49.2%, and this was now the seventh year in a row that our emissions activity had shown a decrease in a 12 month period.

In recent years, significant financial savings had also been made as a result, with combined financial savings / cost of avoidance in the last 3 years of over £1.1m. Projects such as the LED street lighting replacement programme and energy efficiency improvements in our assets had continued to deliver real benefits and savings.

As the adopted Climate Change Strategy drew to its conclusion in January 2021, and as the Council were over half way on a path to Net Zero emissions from our own estate and operations, it was hoped to now develop a new Net Zero Plan to take us to zero emissions, and build on the emergence of more sustainable behaviours that had come to the fore during the Covid pandemic.

RESOLVED that:-

1. Cabinet note the positive performance in reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases from Council activity in 2019/20, and associated financial savings.

2. Cabinet support continued efforts to reduce our emissions via a range of activities.

**CAB
24/20** **Economy Thematic Report**

Cabinet noted a detailed report providing an overview of the impact of Covid-19 on the businesses and people of the Borough.

It was noted that the impact of Covid-19 on the economy of Stockton-on-Tees continued to be significant with many of the Borough's businesses remaining under restrictions brought about by the global pandemic and as a result, many of the Borough's residents had been furloughed through the Government's job retention scheme. Although these numbers were reducing, many more residents were claiming benefits due to redundancies and a reduction in job vacancies.

Covid-19 had impacted the economy and the people of the Borough extensively, in our deprived wards but also in our more affluent ones. Council Officers responded to over 600 calls from businesses in the first week of lockdown; with 2,500 telephone calls being handled by mid-July. Up to 21 September, the Council had distributed payments of over £32m to support 2,815 business grant applications.

Many of the actions contained within the Council Plan remained relevant in our response to supporting the local economy, both before, during and after the pandemic. The pandemic does mean however that there is an increased challenge, and this is a high priority to the Council.

In addition, officers were actively developing and establishing an Employment, Education and Skills "hub" that would, amongst other things:

- Bring together and co-ordinate the work currently ongoing across the Council;
- Link with partners such as DWP;
- Look to match people to available jobs;
- Identify skills gaps and provide support for people into skills;
- Be a Hub and spoke model with access for all parts of the Borough.

This strategic and co-ordinated approach to Education, Employment and Skills (EES) provision was set out and necessary in order to respond to increasing need due to redundancies and a reduction in job vacancies in the economy and to harness any new opportunities that emerge in a collaborative way.

Where appropriate to do so, the Council would link into any additional support that the TVCA Recovery Plan proposed, however our focus would very much be about building on our current priorities to deliver local actions that support inclusive economic growth and inward investment; business development and job creation; and moving people into jobs.

**CAB
25/20** **Investing In Our Town Centres**

Cabinet considered an update on progress with transformational change across the Borough's six town centres.

In February 2020 Cabinet approved a vision for Stockton town centre which focused on the reduction of retail space and the redevelopment of the Castlegate site linking the High Street to the River and providing the opportunity for commercial development. This was considered by Cabinet as part of the Council's accommodation review which identified the need for two new modern low carbon buildings in Stockton and Billingham to replace the costly, inefficient ten existing administrative buildings.

The Council remained committed to investment across all town centres in the Borough and in January 2020 concluded the consultation programme 'let's talk about our towns'. Over the past seven months the Covid-19 pandemic had had an unprecedented impact on the lives of residents across the Borough and the country and the world. As well as the devastating health impacts, the damage to the economy had also been unprecedented and the vulnerable viability of town centres before the pandemic was now more challenging than ever.

Recognising the economic challenges, the Council remained committed to investment across its town centres and strengthening its resolve to ensure they have a vibrancy for future generations. The report set out the opportunities for investment across the six town centres and outlined the next steps including some early opportunities.

RESOLVED that:-

1. Cabinet note the consultation responses from 'Lets Talk about our Towns', which concluded in January 2020 and delegate the forward engagement strategy for each Town to the Director of Town Centres Investment in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing.
2. Cabinet approve the emerging priorities for the Thornaby Town Investment Plan as detailed in paragraph 21 of the report and delegate final approval of a final submission document to the Director of Town Centres Investment in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing.
3. Cabinet approve use of £750,000 Towns Fund funding to support delivery of priorities identified for inclusion within the Thornaby Town Investment Plan.
4. Cabinet approve the recommendation as set out in paragraph 2 of Appendix A.
5. Cabinet approve the principle of developing a masterplan for Billingham and full business case that will explore large scale commercial investment opportunities with the owners of the Centre, St Modwen, including routes to delivery, shareholding and joint venture opportunities; the outcome of the business case to be presented to Cabinet in early 2021.
6. Cabinet agree to receive masterplans at a future meeting in early 2021, which will include development proposals for:

Billingham
Ingleby Barwick
Norton
Stockton
Thornaby (Town Investment Plan update)
Yarm

7. Cabinet approve the allocation of up to £250,000 of the resources allocated to Town Centres Investment approved in the Council's Medium Term Financial for the development of masterplan and business case developments detailed within recommendation 6 above.

**CAB
26/20**

Investing In Our Town Centres - Exempt Appendix

This was the confidential information considered as part of agenda item Investing in Our Town Centres. Please refer to the detail above for the decision