

Cabinet

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday, 17th December, 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 , Michael Henderson, Rebecca Saunders-Thompson, Judith Trainer (MD), Beccy Brown, Jonathan Nertney, Sophie Haste (HR&L), Garry Cummings (F,D&BS), Martin Gray (CHS), Reuben Kench (CL&E), Jamie McCann (CS), Ann Workman (AH).

Also in attendance: Cllrs Barlow, Clark, Gamble, Hall, Riordan, Stephenson; Netanya Alwis (Chair and Head of Community Safety, BMBF), Olivia Jessop (Head of Health and Wellbeing, BMBF), Jamie West (Head of Business, Regeneration and Transport, BMBF), Loui Sawley (Head of Environment and Green Space, BMBF).

Apologies: None

CAB 34/20 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillors Cook declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in respect of the item entitled Minutes of Various Bodies as a result of his role on the Tees Valley Combined Authority.

Councillor Cooke declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in respect of the item entitled 'Bright Minds, Big Futures - 12 Month Update' as a result of being a member of Tees Music Alliance who had worked in partnership with BMBF.

CAB 35/20 **Minutes of the Meeting held on 12th November 2020-For Signature/Approval**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 12th November 2020 were agreed and signed as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of Councillors Clark and Stephenson's names as being in attendance.

CAB 36/20 **Place Select Committee - Scrutiny Review of Business Support and Engagement**

Consideration was given to the final report that presented the outcome of the Place Select Committee review of Business Support & Engagement.

RESOLVED that:-

- 1). The Council raises awareness of the existing information system enabling current and prospective business owners to search for available property and land, and ensures that those using this facility know where to go for further advice, guidance and support;
- 2) The Council strengthens communication of its business support offer via dedicated social media platforms;
- 3) A review of local business networks (including Stockton Business Forum),

and how these can best operate in the current and post-pandemic environment, be undertaken;

4) Consideration be given around developing support for businesses which are run from home (e.g. encouragement of 'co-working spaces' where people who work on their own could come together to chat / brainstorm);

5) There is an increased awareness and understanding of the business needs of groups with protected characteristics, particularly with regards the impact of COVID-19 on sectors that employ significant numbers of people from these groups (e.g. taxi drivers, hospitality);

6) The Council evaluates its existing retail support programme:

a) to ensure it fits with the current and likely future needs of local businesses;

b) to consider widening the programme to businesses based outside of Town Centres;

c) to consider similar support packages for non-retail business (e.g. start-up support in view of the anticipated rise in such ventures);

7) A future update on the SBC Business and Enterprise Team's intended work around employment, education and skills with schools, colleges and universities be provided to the Council's Children and Young People Select Committee;

8) A future update be provided to the Place Select Committee around the Inclusive Growth agenda, and how this has impacted upon the people of the Borough.

CAB 37/20 Final Report of People Select Committee – Scrutiny Review of Council Tax Support Scheme

Cabinet noted that the People Select Committee commenced work on a review of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme in 2019 with a view to introducing any changes to the scheme from April 2021. However, the impact of Covid 19 has introduced an extra layer of complexity and the Select Committee therefore considered a report in October 2020 on the risks of forecasting, developing and consulting on changes in the midst of the pandemic.

The Select Committee concluded that more time was needed to understand the financial impact of Coronavirus on customers and their ability to pay a minimum contribution, the rise in caseload and any wider welfare reforms that may come through as part of the Government's response to the pandemic.

Whilst the Committee considered that it would be beneficial to continue to review and modernise the LCTS process, it would not be appropriate to make changes impacting on the financial aspects of the scheme until more is known about the affordability of the current scheme and any alternative proposals.

RESOLVED that:-

1. Given the uncertainty around the numbers of claimants and financial costs caused by the impact of the Coronavirus, no changes are made for the 2021/22 financial year;

2). Draft scheme proposals are developed and presented to Cabinet once there is a greater understanding of the impact of Coronavirus on the increasing demand for support and the consequential increase in cost and affordability of scheme changes, anticipated to be introduced for the 2022/23 financial year. This should ensure:-

- consideration is given to the benefits and impacts of alternative approaches to the existing scheme, including, but not limited to the workings of a banded scheme and a change in the minimum contribution rate.
- for consistency, future scheme proposals include appropriate technical changes to reflect the welfare reforms already introduced into the LCTS pensioner scheme and Housing Benefit / Universal Credit schemes.
- the intention to incentivise work, protect the vulnerable and support families with children is retained within a revised scheme
- in line with the Local Government Finance Act, consideration is given to transitional protection should some customers be negatively affected by changes to the scheme.
- funds are set aside from April 2021 to provide targeted support to customers struggling to pay the minimum 20% contribution using section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act and the council's own Discretionary Hardship policy.

CAB 38/20 Bright Minds Big Futures Update

Cabinet noted and received a 12-month update presented by members of Bright Minds, Big Futures (BMBF) on BMBF's Big Objectives document, following Cabinet's approval of the Big Plan.

This included detail regarding the following achievements:-

- Knife crime and violent crime awareness motion passed at Council – February 2020;
- Young Persons Community Safety Question Time – February 2020;
- Secret Sound (over £800 raised in total) – February 2020;
- Winners of the County Durham Community Foundation High Sheriff Youth Award (March 20);
- Led on APSE Local Government Commission 2030 at the British Youth Council, North East Convention and produced supporting report and video to be included in findings (June 20);
- Winners of Mayors Green Space Award – July 2020;
- Successfully secured £400 Tees Valley Nature Partnership Funding for Bird and Bat Boxes – September 2020;
- Successfully secured £1200 Branching Out Funding for trees at Leven Park and 18 Fruit Trees across 3 sites – September 2020;
- Successfully secured £1200 from Thirteen to roll out a Refill and Reuse project

in 2021;

- Launched own funding stream “Pot of Gold” – November 2020.

In addition to the above, there had also been a significant contribution in making the Borough a great place to grow up through projects and initiatives such as:

- Environmental Work
- Social Action Projects
- Health & Well Being initiatives
- Community Safety
- SBC Correspondents coverage
- Improving the voice of the child in statutory services
- Established excellent links with local MP's.

Cabinet commended BMBF on an excellent year's work which was an inspiration to everyone.

CAB 39/20 Council Plan 6 Monthly Update

Cabinet were provided with an update on the implementation of the Council Plan and the priority actions for 2020/21.

This included an outline of the priorities; a commentary on progress; and an analysis of priority actions for the rest of 2020/21 and in future years which incorporates the implications of COVID-19.

Despite the impact of COVID-19, work had progressed on many priorities in the Council Plan. Services and staff had responded flexibly, innovatively and effectively to ensure there was minimum disruption to service delivery. Around 60% of this year's actions remained on track, and many others were only slightly delayed. This reflected a huge commitment and effort from all services in responding quickly to the challenges, and in maintaining service provision, even as services were impacted by positive cases or staff absence through isolation.

Many changes in the way services were delivered were made and for many this had been made possible through a shift to more virtual ways of working, alongside adjusting to the routine of working from home. For those services where home working was not possible, significant changes had to be made to ways of working on shift patterns, changes to the physical environment and other adjustments to procedures and protocols to keep services running. There are examples of this across a range of services, from staff keeping in touch and visiting those in need in their homes, to care homes, children's homes, to refuse, catering and cleaning services to name a few.

In addition, many additional new services have been developed; others have seen their work increase significantly and others have adapted their focus to be on COVID-19 related activity, including:

- a.The key role of the Public Health team in the development of outbreak

management plans and responses, including the provision of advice, guidance, support and risk assessment support to workspaces, schools and other settings, 7 days a week;

b. Establishment of the Community Support Team and other work to support those isolating; we have over 9,000 Clinically Extremely Vulnerable people who have been contacted to advise on the help available;

c. The risk assessment of buildings and services;

d. The additional role and responsibility for advice and guidance to staff, the public and service providers and partners, we continue to proactively send COVID-related communications to businesses and residents;

e. Enhanced arrangements to support care homes including financial support and advice, infection control and access to personal protective equipment;

f. Support for schools including risk assessments, staffing advice, public health advice;

g. Design of new approaches to and the allocation of, business loans and grants with over £33m of business grants paid to a range of businesses across the Borough.

CAB 40/20 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 – 11th September 2020

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

CAB 41/20 2020 Event Summary & 2021 Memorial Lighting Calendar

Cabinet noted that the COVID pandemic had had a major impact on the Council's outdoor events programme and continues to present uncertainty for events scheduled for 2021.

Members were provided a brief overview of the event related activity that had taken place in 2020 and on the work of our Independent Safety Advisory Group (ISAG).

The report also provided the suggested calendar for memorial lighting during 2021.

RESOLVED that:-

1. Cabinet note the success of the SIRF@Home and other events during 2020 that were delivered in COVID-secure ways.

2. The proposed memorial lighting calendar for 2021 be approved.

CAB 42/20 Final Report of People Select Committee –Scrutiny Review of Public Consultation

Consideration was given to the final report that presented the outcome of the People Select Committee review of Public Consultation.

RESOLVED that:-

- 1) Building on the success of the Town Centre Consultation, paper consultation forms and public meetings be retained in future for large-scale consultations, where appropriate, to allow residents who cannot access online consultation to contribute their views;
- 2). The Council improve the quality of the information on the consultation pages of the website and in Stockton News, including both activity and feedback. This will help to raise awareness of consultations to all residents and foster trust;
- 3). Engagement with young people be increased, through the use of engagement activities with Bright Minds Big Futures;
- 4). Promotion of 'Your Views Matter', The Residents' Panel and regular feedback via social media platforms, including Facebook and Twitter, be increased;
- 5). As per normal practice, the current consultation platform continued be reviewed regularly to determine if alternative consultation platforms are available to SBC;
- 6) Links to current consultations be embedded into the start-up screens of public computers in libraries across the Borough;
- 7). The Residents' Panel be used more effectively as a means of engagement outside of formal consultations and we provide regular feedback to the panel.

*Activities carried out in relation to recommendations are subject to Covid 19 guidelines and restrictions.

CAB 43/20 Final Report of the Children and Young People Select Committee - Scrutiny Review of the Cost of School Uniform

Consideration was given to the final report that presented the outcome of the Children & Young People Select Committee review of the Cost of School Uniform.

Members expressed support for sharing the findings with all schools, reinforced at appropriate forums such as the Head Teachers forum and suggested the Council's Governing Body Section be enlisted to facilitate this task.

RESOLVED that:-

1.) Academy Trusts and Governing Bodies of Stockton Schools be asked to review their school uniform policies as a matter of urgency in consultation with parents and children taking account of the DfE advice to give the highest priority to cost and, in particular:

- „«-Keeping items of branded uniform to a minimum
- „«-Avoiding the use of specified suppliers
- „«-Avoiding different requirements for different year groups
- „«-Avoiding the compulsory use of children's initials on uniform items

2. School governing bodies and leadership teams review the support they provide to families struggling to meet uniform costs taking account of the ideas and initiatives in place across Stockton schools gathered as part of this scrutiny exercise;

3).All support provided by schools be clearly published on school websites alongside their uniform policies;

4. Improved co-ordination/ signposting of community and school-based support is co-ordinated through the new Community Partnerships;

5. The Government is urged to pass legislation to put the DfE best practice guidance on a statutory footing and support is sought from local MPs towards this end.

6.The findings from the scrutiny review and the best practice from the school survey be shared with all Stockton Schools and reinforced at appropriate forums.

**CAB
44/20 Annual Report of the Governing Body for the Learning & Skills Service**

Cabinet noted an update on the work of the Learning and Skills Service in supporting residents, employers and community partners with learning opportunities and employment initiatives to meet social and economic priorities.

The report highlighted the challenges arising from the COVID pandemic and our success in developing our Virtual Learning Environment and ensuring our learners continued to reach achievement targets which are above the national benchmark rates.