

Cabinet

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday, 24th June, 2021.

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

Officers: Julie Danks, Margaret Waggott, John Devine, Rachel Harrison, Nigel Hart (MD), Julie Butcher (HR&L), Garry Cummings, Michelle Connolly ,(F,D&BS), Martin Gray (CHS), Jamie McCann (CS), Ann Workman (AH).

Also in attendance: Cllrs Frost, Hall, Perry, Woodhead and Mrs Walmsley.

Apologies: Cllrs Gamble, Smith and Stephenson O.B.E..

CAB 1/21

Declarations of Interest

Cllr Ann McCoy declared a personal non-prejudicial, interest in respect of the item entitled Council Tax Reduction Scheme as it made reference to SDAIS in the report, and she is on the board of SDAIS.

Cllr Nigel Cooke declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in respect of the item entitled Stockton-on-Tees Local Area SEND Strategy 2021-23as he was an employee of TEWV who had been involved in the preparation of the strategy.

Cllr Bob Cook declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in the item entitled School Term and Holiday Dates 2021/22 (Amendment) as he was a governor on two schools in the borough.

CAB 2/21

Minutes of the Meeting held on 20th May 2021-For Approval/Signature

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 20th May 2021 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

CAB 3/21

Council Plan Annual Report 2020/21

Cabinet received an update on the Council Plan and the priority actions for 2020/21. Whilst it focused on the implementation of the Council Plan 2020/21, given the exceptional circumstances in which activity to deliver the priorities had been undertaken, the report also summarised some of the key additional activities undertaken over the past 12 months in response to 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. 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, staff absence through isolation or changing guidance and levels of restriction.

So despite these challenges, the Council had continued to make considerable progress on the implementation of the actions in the Council Plan in 2020/21 with very few priorities on hold, though some were being refocused to reflect the experience and impact of COVID-19, and therefore had been reprofiled for completion in 2021/22.

The key priorities for 2021/22 identified as part of the emerging work on recovery were set out in the new Council Plan 2021-24 approved by Council in March 2021.

**CAB
4/21**

Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2022/2023

Members were advised that a review of the local Council Tax Reduction scheme had been undertaken following the report to Cabinet received from the People Select Committee in December 2020.

Cabinet approval was sought to undertake a consultation with both the public and the Major Precepting Authorities in respect of proposed changes to the Council's Council Tax Reduction scheme with effect from 1 April 2022.

The scheme applied to working age applicants; the scheme for clients of pension age was prescribed by Central Government.

The current scheme was largely based on the housing benefit scheme which was being phased out by Government and was both complex for the customer to understand and burdensome for the Council to administer.

This report recommended a scheme which increased the maximum award from 80% to 100%, provided residents with the lowest income levels the greatest level of support, reduced the complexity for the customer and reduced the administration burden for the Council.

In the proposed scheme, modelling suggested that 9,300 (75%) would receive more support, including approximately 8,000 (approximately 65%) households which would no longer have to pay council tax at all. Inevitably, with any change in scheme, there would be some households that were adversely affected and modelling suggested this would be approximately 2,600 (21%).

The new scheme would contain additional provisions to protect individuals who experienced exceptional hardship. Where any applicant was likely to experience exceptional hardship, they would be encouraged to apply for an exceptional hardship payment. The Council would consider all applications for exceptional hardship on an individual basis, taking into account available income and essential outgoings. Where appropriate further support would be given to the applicant. This approach would enable individual applicants to be dealt with in a fair and equitable manner.

RESOLVED that Cabinet approve consultation with the public and major precepting authorities on the introduction of a new income banded Council Tax Reduction scheme for working age applicants with effect from 1 April 2022.

**CAB
5/21**

Development of Adult Services-Update

Cabinet approval was sought for bringing the following two services in-house for further development:

- The Home Improvement Agency (HIA) service, including Minor Adaptation, Handyman and Home Repairs/Improvement related Advice & Information;

- The Shared Lives Service: carers will share their home and family life with the person receiving support.

Evidence had shown that the Carers Service, which was previously brought in house, had had an exceptional impact in supporting informal carers and it was hoped that this proposal would have a similar positive effect on people's lives through the HIA and Shared Lives services.

A summary of each service was provided. Bringing the HIA service in-house would present opportunities to work closely with Community Services, Adults and Health and Housing (Facilities Disabilities Grant) to enable the service to focus on strategic developments and improvement in the future. A steering group to focus on service development and improvement had also been set up and staff from the Council's Community Service, Heating Ventilation and Electrical (HVE) Team would collect feedback from people receiving the service on service satisfaction and areas of improvement to ensure the Council provides an excellent service.

The Shared Lives service would be placed with the Carers Service. The advantage of putting the SL service with the Carers Service is that the carers' service was already in contact with carers from all walks of life. Carers who are compassionate and have the skills and experience to support someone who requires personal care. Carers often say they would like to help others live a happy and meaningful life which may mean that carers already known to the Council would be keen to become Shared Lives Carers.

In summary, bringing the HIA and Shared Lives services in-house would enable the Council to support more people and allow the Council to continue developing and improving the services alongside other teams within the Council.

RESOLVED that:

1. Cabinet approve the proposed development of delivering both the Home Improvement Agency Service and The Shared Lives Service services in-house;

2. Cabinet note the Home Improvement Agency service would be brought in-house, and that the HVE team would deliver this service from 1 July 2021. that

**CAB
6/21**

Stockton-on-Tees Local Area SEND Strategy 2021-23

Cabinet approval was sought for the proposed Stockton-on-Tees Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) strategy for children and young people aged 0-25 and their families.

The proposed strategy had been developed jointly by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group and parents/carers of children and young people with SEND represented by the Stockton Parent

Carer Forum. The strategy outlined the local area's commitment to driving developments across our system and the services within it so that collectively we support children and young people with SEND to achieve the best possible outcomes and to become successful and happy adults.

The strategy was the culmination of the transformation and improvement journey so far, building upon the learning from the local area inspection in 2019, and brought together our previous strategic implementation plan and action plans into a single, shared and long-term vision.

The strategy was informed by the self-evaluation, the SEND Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Health Needs Assessment, and ongoing consultation, engagement and coproduction work with the families of children and young people with SEND. It had been endorsed by the Health and Wellbeing Board at its meeting on 19 May 2021.

It's six key priorities were:

- Working in partnership with families;
- Understanding the needs and strengths of children, young people and their families;
- Developing a system which meets children, young people and family's needs and is accountable for improving outcomes;
- Ensuring that most children and young peoples' needs can be met in local, inclusive mainstream schools;
- Developing and maintaining a range of local, high quality specialist provision for those who need it;
- Ensuring children and young people achieve their potential and ambitions, and live as independently as possible.

RESOLVED that :-

- 1.Cabinet endorse the proposed Stockton-on-Tees Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy 2021-23 and its six key priorities;
2. Cabinet note that an accompanying action plan will be developed to ensure accountability for key partnership actions and continuous improvement.

**CAB
7/21**

School Term and Holiday Dates 2021/22 (Amendment)

Cabinet was requested to approve an amended calendar of school term and holiday dates for 2021/2022 academic year.

School employers were required to set the term dates of their school year. Further to the school term and holiday dates for 2021/2022 that had been agreed by Cabinet on 27 June 2019, there had since been an announcement that the Spring Bank Holiday in 2022 will be moved to Thursday 2 June and an additional Bank Holiday on Friday 3 June will see a four-day weekend to celebrate Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

The Department for Education will be reviewing the necessary legislation and, as far as the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document is concerned, an amendment will be made for September 2021 version that reduces the number of days that teachers need to be available to work from 190 (+ 5 Professional Development Days) to 189 (+ 5 Professional Development Days). The total school year will therefore be 194 days.

In order to incorporate the reduction of working days, it was proposed that schools still return on 1st September 2021 as planned. It was therefore suggested, that due to timescales, schools be allowed to set their own additional holiday as long as this is within the 2021/2022 academic year.

RESOLVED that the proposed school term and holiday dates 2021/2022, be agreed.

CAB 8/21 Approval of 9 month Extension to Waste Disposal Contract

Cabinet was advised that the current Tees Valley Waste Disposal Contract ended on 21st July 2025, with the timetable of the Service Commencement Date (SCD) for the new ERF project to be the 1st April 2026.

Due to this 9 month period (between 21st July 2025 and 1st April 2026), it was a requirement that we have an arrangement in place for the disposal of our waste until our new facility is operational and accepting waste.

Cabinet was therefore invited to authorise the Council to enter into the Contract Extension Option Agreement between the four former Cleveland authorities and Suez, which shall provide service continuity on the existing Waste Disposal Contract until at least 31st March 2026.

RESOLVED that Cabinet authorise the Council to enter into the Contract Extension Option Agreement between the four former Cleveland authorities and Suez, which shall provide service continuity on the existing Waste Disposal Contract until at least 31st March 2026 .

CAB 9/21 Levelling Up - Stockton-on-Tees

Cabinet were provided with an update on the Council's proposals to bid into Government's levelling up agenda announced as part of the 3rd March 2021 budget by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The main themes of the Government's levelling up agenda included town centres, transport and heritage. The ongoing investment programme by the Council across all six of its town centres provided the ideal opportunity to align Government funding opportunities from the levelling up agenda to the Council's existing ambitions for its town centres.

The levelling up agenda allowed Local Authorities to make bids for each Parliamentary Constituency area and Cabinet were invited to note the detail of proposals that had been submitted for the Constituency areas of Stockton North and Stockton South.

Local Authorities can bid up to a maximum of £20M per constituency area and there was a requirement for Local Authorities to provide a 10% local contribution to this overall figure. The two bids for Stockton North and Stockton South were submitted on Friday 18 June 2021 and were developed in full consultation with the MP for Stockton North and MP for Stockton South respectively. Following detailed assessment, a decision on the outcome of the bids is expected in Autumn 2021.

**CAB
10/21**

Ward Boundary Review- Warding Patterns Consultation

Cabinet noted the outcome of consultation held by the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC) on warding patterns as part of the Stockton on Tees Electoral Review 2020 Ward Boundary Review.

Cabinet, at its meeting held on November 2020, noted that the Local Government Boundary Commission had responded to the Council Size submission on the Stockton on Tees Electoral Ward Boundary Review 2020 and had confirmed that they had approved our future Council Size of 56 Members; a decision which would then be applied when considering the next phase of the consultation. Phase 2 – Consultation on Warding Patterns had commenced with all elected members from 24th September – 29th October 2020 and the results from this consultation were noted by Council and submitted to The Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

Draft recommendations had now been received from the Boundary Commission which confirmed that Stockton-on-Tees should be represented by 56 councillors, the same number as there were presently and that Stockton-on-Tees should have 26 wards, again the same number as at present.

The Boundary Commission had since commenced consultation on the draft recommendations illustrated with accompanying maps for a 10-week period, commencing from 11 May 2021 to 19 July 2021.

Consultation with elected members and political groups of the Council had commenced at the same time and the results from this consultation to date were summarised. Ward Members present at the meeting representing the Fairfield Ward affected significantly by the proposals, spoke out reiterating their objections outlined in the report. Cabinet were advised that the comments submitted as part of the report were for noting and subsequent consideration by Council; and would then be forwarded to the Boundary Commission on the basis that they represented the views of political parties as indicated.

The deadline for submission of comments as part of this consultation ends on 19th July 2021 and comments could be submitted direct to LGBC via their website r.eviews@lgbce.org.uk.

The Commission's decision on council size would not be formalised until the Final Recommendations were agreed and would be published in October this year.

RECOMMENDED that Cabinet note the comments received as part of the consultation on the Local Government Boundary Commission draft

recommendations and they be submitted to Council and thereafter to the Local Government Boundary Commission by the 19th July 2021.

**CAB
11/21**

2023 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies

Cabinet noted that the Boundary Commission for England (BCE) had been tasked to conduct a review of the parliamentary constituencies in England based on the updated rules in the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 2020. The BCE must complete the current review and make a formal report to the Speaker of the House of Commons before the 1 July 2023.

Parliamentary Boundaries reflected the area where the electorate vote for their MP, and the review will examine these areas and make proposals for a new set of boundaries. The Act requires there to be a fixed number of 650 constituencies.

The North East region had been allocated 27 constituencies (currently it had 29). The BCE's initial proposals aimed to wholly contain each of these constituencies in the North East region.

The BCE is also required by the Act to ensure that each proposed constituency had an electorate as at the 2 March 2020 that was no less than 95% and no more than 105% of the UK electoral quota. This quota had been calculated at 73,393. Accordingly, each constituency must have an electorate that was no smaller than 69,724 and no larger than 77,062.

Taking these requirements and other statutory factors into account, the BCE published its initial proposals for England, including the North East on the 8 June 2021 for an 8 week consultation period ending 2nd August 2021. Other statutory factors taken into consideration were:

- Special geographical considerations e.g. mountains lakes rivers;
- Local Government boundaries as they exist or were in prospect on 1 December 2020;
- Boundaries of existing constituencies;
- Any local ties;
- The inconveniences attendant on such changes.

The BCE was required to consider all written representations made to it during the consultation period and representations would be published alongside the initial proposals. The BCE would be encouraging all interested parties to contribute views through their consultation website by the 2nd August 2021.

The results to date from consultation with elected members and political groups of the Council were summarised. Members present at the meeting representing wards within Thornaby affected significantly by the proposals, reiterated their objections contained within the report and spoke out against the BCE proposals which effectively sought to split wards within Thornaby into two different Parliamentary constituencies. Cabinet were advised that the comments submitted as part of the report were for noting and subsequent consideration by Council; and would then be forwarded to the BCE on the basis that they represented the views of political parties as indicated.

RECOMMENDED that:-

- 1. The report be noted;**
- 2. Responses received to date on the initial proposals be noted and be submitted to Council for noting at its meeting on 14 July 2021;**
- 3. Any additional responses received following this meeting of Cabinet be submitted to July Council for noting.**