

Cabinet

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday, 16th September, 2021.

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

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

Also in attendance: Cllrs Gamble, Hall & Stephenson O.B.E.; Mr D.Ferard (PLuSS).

Apologies: Cllr Smith

CAB 28/21 Evacuation Procedure

The evacuation procedure was noted.

CAB 29/21 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declaration of Interest recorded.

CAB 30/21 Minutes of the Meetings held on 15th & 29th July 2021 - For Approval/Signature

The Minutes of the Meetings held on 15th & 29th July were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

CAB 31/21 FINANCIAL UPDATE AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN (2021/22 QUARTER 1)

Cabinet was invited to note the Council's financial performance and position at the end of the first quarter of the 2021/22 financial year.

The summary position set out that:-

- The Covid Pandemic continued to have a financial impact in 2021/22. The Local Government Finance Settlement for 2021/22 included an allocation of Covid Support Funding of £5.623m, together with a time limited extension to the Sales, Fees and Charges Income Compensation Scheme.
- Monitoring of the financial position for the Council's Core business for the first quarter of the financial year (to 30th June 2021) highlighted a projected overall underspend of £955,000. A breakdown of the areas of variance were contained within the report. The position would continue to be closely monitored and managed throughout the remainder of the financial year.
- The position on the Contain Outbreak Management Fund and Covid Recovery.
- An update on the Capital Programme.

It was noted that the Council had been allocated additional funding in 2021/22 in respect of Covid Support funding of £5.623m and in the form of the Sales, Fees

and Charges Income Compensation Scheme (currently estimated at £0.473m). In addition, New Burdens Funding of £229,000 had been received in respect of supporting the Council in delivering the various Covid Support Schemes.

The Outturn Report for 2020/21 identified that the balance of the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) was being carried forward for use in 2021/22. When added to additional COMF funds received for 2021/22, the total amount available and uncommitted was £4.550m. In compliance with the terms of the funding an element of existing expenditure would be charged to the Grant, which would have the impact of freeing up funding to be deployed on Covid recovery priorities.

The Council continued to provide Covid support and to respond as required to the Covid Pandemic. In total this was expected to amount to £1.7m and covered the Outbreak Response Team and Marshalls, support to Carers, support to the Voluntary and Community Sector and Covid related Communications. Therefore, a sum of £2.850m was available to support Covid Recovery and it was proposed that this be utilised as set out below:

Priority	£'000
Civic Enforcement	410
Targeted Care for Your Area	250
Highways / Potholes	400
Support for Fairer SOT Framework	120
Employment Hub	500
Skills Support	200
Early Years Communications	170
ICT / Digital Improvements	250
Technology support income collection	200
Support to Taxi Licensing & Markets	350
TOTAL	2850

RESOLVED that:-

1. The update to the Medium Term Financial Plan and the current level of General Fund balances be noted.
2. The revised Capital Programme at Appendix A to the report be noted.

**CAB
32/21** **Residents Survey**

Cabinet were provided with an overview of the work being undertaken to address the four key service areas identified in the 2019 residents survey as priority areas for improvement:

- Community Safety;
- Road and pavement maintenance and repairs;
- Support services for elderly people;
- Family hubs.

The focus of service delivery over the period since the survey was carried out, at the end of 2019, had necessarily been on responding to Covid-19. It was therefore timely now to report to Cabinet the planning and actions that had been taken to deliver improvements in these services, the details of which were set out but included:-

- Community Safety

Additional short-term resource of £410k had been proposed in the Quarter 1 MTFP report at this meeting which would allow for the recruitment of additional community enforcement officers. This would allow for an enhanced service to be delivered in support of the re-opening of the local economy and post-pandemic recovery in Stockton on Tees;

Aside from this additional investment, existing work programs had continued and resulted in a reduction in both crime and anti-social behaviour in Stockton on Tees which now had the lowest levels of crime and ASB in Cleveland. There were 15,393 publicly reported offences in the Borough last year, a 4.6% decrease from the same period the previous year. This is the lowest rate in Cleveland Force area. Stockton-on-Tees has also seen a 2.8% fall in the levels of anti-social behaviour over the last year and had the lowest rate of in the Cleveland Force area.

-Road and pavement maintenance and repairs

Through asset management a targeted programme of resurfacing works is and will continue to be undertaken. At the time of the 2019 Survey, approximately 18% of unclassified roads were known to be in poor condition, however, since then this figure reduced to 13% during 2019/20 and is currently at 10% for 2020/21. Further improvements through targeted interventions will be made during 2021/22.

Additional funding of £250k has also been proposed in the MTFP report at this meeting to provide targeted grounds maintenance and pavement and kerbside maintenance. The additional resource allocation in CFYA will be used to provide an boost to street cleansing service to be delivered post-pandemic.

-Support Services for elderly people

Despite funding challenges, the improvement in services for elderly people is a priority for the Council and is reflected in three key priorities in the 2021-24 Council Plan:

- a. "Develop more services to help people to remain safely and independently in their homes for as long as possible and to make sure that they are not lonely";
- b. Improve the quality of care within adult residential homes in the Borough and to support them as they continue to adapt to dealing with the challenges arising from Covid-19.";

c. Review out of area placements and day options provision for adults to ensure as many services as possible are provided within the Borough.”

An updated Adult Services Strategy for 2021-24 has recently been finalised following extensive engagement and consultation with stakeholders, partners and service users. The strategy set out a clear way forward for development and improvement.

-Family Hubs

In 2018 the children’s centres were renamed family hubs and were placed at the centre of this new model of delivery. There are currently four family hubs provided by the local authority, one in each of the most deprived areas of Stockton-on-Tees. The offer within each hub differs and reflects community need. Some hubs include a café or library, and all offer childcare through creches on site. The Council had worked to ensure that there is consistency across hubs in delivering core services.

The model included universal functions and services, which are available to all and where the focus was on preventing difficulties from emerging; secondary prevention, which placed a greater emphasis on identifying vulnerable children, young people and families and ensuring that there are specific preventative programmes and actions in place to reduce risks; and a more targeted approach, with a strong emphasis on case management and the delivery of targeted, evidence-based practice.

There are an increasing number of services and programmes offered within family hubs, delivered by family hub staff or other organisations. Services include evidence-based parenting programmes from antenatal to teens, mindfulness and relaxation for children of all ages, sleep workshops, and youth groups. Drop-in sessions are provided by a number of different services and professionals, including health visitors and midwives.

Over the past year, in response to Covid-19, the hubs have moved to delivering parenting programmes virtually, and increasing their use of social media. For those unable to access the digital offer, phone support has continued to be offered. The hubs have provided support with holiday activities, help with food and other essentials especially during lock down when the centres remained open for this work. Local communities have been active in help and support through volunteering and parent carer forums. The EPEC –Empowering Parents Empowering Communities recruits parents from communities to deliver parenting programmes to their own communities.

**CAB
33/21**

Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Complaints Report 2002/21

Cabinet were provided with a report providing details of the Ombudsman’s annual review letter for the Council for 2020/21, together with Annual statistics

for 2020, identifying the use of the powers available to the Local Authority through the RIPA Act 2000.

It was noted that 29 enquiries were submitted to the Ombudsman during the year, which was a reduction from 40 the previous year, and of these, 9 met the threshold for a detailed investigation by the Ombudsman. Of the 9 complaint investigations, 4 were upheld. All recommendations made by the Ombudsman, following his investigations have been implemented. No formal public interest reports have been published.

RESOLVED that:-

1. Cabinet note the report which sets out that no formal public interest reports have been received;
2. Cabinet note that effective procedures remain in place to ensure that all learning from Ombudsman recommendations and findings take place;
3. Cabinet note the authorities use of RIPA powers in 2020.

CAB 34/21 From Conception to Reception: Stockton-on-Tees Strategy To Give Every Child the Best Start in Life

Cabinet was presented with the Stockton-on-Tees strategy which sought to give every child the best start in life.

The strategy 2021-23 had been developed jointly by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group, NHS Acute and Community Health Service Providers, Early Years Providers including schools and the private, voluntary and independent sector, alongside families. Families had been involved throughout all stages of development and proposed the title of the strategy 'From Conception to Reception' to affirm our commitment to the ante-natal period alongside a child's earliest years of life.

The strategy outlined the Borough's commitment to driving developments across our system and the services within it so that collectively we empower families and communities to support their children's development and improve outcomes. We recognise that communities which seek to improve the health and development of its children are helping to build strong foundations for future economic growth and prosperity and happy, healthy and nurturing families.

The Strategy identified five key priorities:

- Work alongside families to develop a clear offer of support for all children from conception to five years;
- Building and strengthening early relationships;
- Supporting children and families with the development of early speech, language and communication;
- Supporting families to provide a positive home learning environment;
- Encouraging access to high quality, inclusive and affordable Early Years education.

Each of the priorities had a clear set of partnership commitments which would form an action plan which would be monitored by the Best Start steering group and reported to the Children and Young People's Partnership.

It was envisaged that additional investment would be required to deliver the strategy, including support for early years speech, language and communication programmes, and improving the quality of early years provision and learning environments which can help to support these ambitions. Funding would be sought from a variety of sources as opportunities arose.

The strategy would be considered by Cabinet, Health and Wellbeing Board and Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group committees during May, August and September. Subject to Cabinet approval, the Strategy would be promoted through a multi-agency shared communications plan to support wider communication across the borough.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:-

1. Endorse the proposed Strategy and its five key priorities;
2. Note that the Strategy has been coproduced by families and a range of partners who are committed to improving pregnancy and early childhood outcomes;
3. Note that an accompanying action plan will be developed to ensure accountability for key partnership actions and progress towards the strategic outcomes framework.

CAB 35/21 PRIVATE LANDLORDS SUPPORTING STOCKTON (PLuSS) SCHEME REVIEW

Members were reminded that previous reports had been presented to Cabinet which considered the option of Selective Licensing of the private rented sector in Central Stockton and the Victoria area of the Mandale and Victoria ward (North Thornaby). During the selective licensing consultation period, private sector landlords approached the Council with an alternative proposal, one which they considered would achieve the same outcomes as Selective Licensing ; i.e. drive up standards of property condition and management of private rented housing.

In January 2019, Cabinet agreed to postpone a decision on Selective Licensing to allow for a period of engagement with private sector landlords and the establishment of a Landlord Led Membership scheme. Originally it was intended to report back to Cabinet 6-months after the scheme commenced, however due to the COVID pandemic Cabinet agreed to allow the scheme to operate for a minimum 18-months before a review/evaluation be undertaken. Cabinet were provided with a report detailing the scheme review undertaken by officers.

Applications to join the P LuSS scheme started well but decreased significantly after March 2020, with only 14 applications received between March 2020 and July 2021. In considering how membership of the P LuSS scheme compared with the original proposal Selective Licensing scheme proposal, under the terms of the Selective Licensing proposal, it was estimated 1,523 privately rented properties would have required a licence across the two Selective Licensing areas. 593 properties are covered by the P LuSS scheme which equates to 39% of those properties which under the terms of a Selective Licensing designation would have required a license. P LuSS have tried a number of ways to promote and advertise the scheme but unfortunately this has had limited impact on securing new members.

Of those landlords and managing agents who signed the P LuSS consultation document objecting to Selective Licensing and proposing this alternative scheme, only 57 (59%) have subsequently chosen to join the P LuSS scheme.

Mr Dominic Ferard, Chair of P LuSS, was in attendance at the meeting and spoke in support of its continuation.

Given that the number of private rented properties included in the Landlord Led Membership scheme was lower than anticipated, Cabinet was invited to consider the exploration of a Selective Licensing Scheme for the Borough as an option going forward. To do so, the Council would need to determine whether it had a robust evidence base to justify Selective Licensing and details of how this would be undertaken were included within the report. It was expected that this process of exploration could take 5-6 months to complete before a further report could be submitted to Cabinet, during which time officers would continue to support P LuSS in the promotion of their scheme with the hope of take up by private landlords increasing, at which point the position could be re-assessed.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:-

1. Note the outcome of the P LuSS 'Landlord Led Membership Scheme' evaluation;
2. Approve the exploration of a Selective Licensing Scheme for the Borough with a further report to Cabinet following conclusion of the evidence gathering exercise.