

## Cabinet

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday, 9th December, 2021.

**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, Sophie Haste, Jonathan Nertney (HR&L), Martin Gray (CHS), Jamie McCann (CS&T), Reuben Kench, Neil Mitchell, Craig Taylor (CL&E), Garry Cummings (FD&BS), Emma Champley (AH).

**Also in attendance:** Cllr Clare Gamble, Cllr Norma Stephenson O.B.E.; Lilly Crisp, Olivia Jessop (BMBF).

**Apologies:** None

### **CAB 53/21** Evacuation Procedure

The Evacuation Procedure was noted.

### **CAB 54/21** Declarations of Interest

There were no Declaration of Interests recorded.

### **CAB 55/21** Minutes of the Meeting held on 18th November 2021-For Approval/Signature

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 18th November 2021 were approved and signed as a correct record.

### **CAB 56/21** Financial Update and Medium Term Financial Plan

Cabinet noted the financial position in the current year (2021/22), along with outline plans for the 2022/23 Budget and the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) based on information provided in the recent Budget and Spending Review 2021.

Members were advised that the financial position for subsequent years remained extremely uncertain as it was currently unclear whether there would be a one year or multi-year Local Government Finance Settlement. It was also unclear when the Fair Funding Review would conclude and whether there would be proposed changes around Business Rates Retention and Re-set.

The ongoing impact of the Pandemic was recognised in the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2021/22, with the allocation of a Covid Support Grant of £5.623m, together with an extension of the Sales, Fees and Charges Income Compensation Scheme for a further quarter (to June 2021). Details were provided of the projected outturn position for each Directorate as at 30th September 2021, along with an explanation of the variances identified.

Cabinet also noted changes to current expenditure plans which need to be factored into the MTFP and received a summary of the budget position which indicated that there was a projected budget gap over the medium term. There were further risks with the plan given the level of funding uncertainty from 2023/24 onwards. The current plan assumed a Council Tax increase of 2.9% in

2022/23 (1.9% core council tax and 1% Adult Social Care levy carried forward from 2021/22).

In calculating the funding available to local government to deliver services, the Government had assumed that all councils would increase core council tax by 2% and apply an additional 1% as Adult Social Care Precept. This was effectively 1% per year more than was currently included in the plan.

Details of the updated Capital Programme were also noted, which included details of new schemes as well as schemes with necessary revisions exceeding £100k.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The updated financial position for 2021/22 be noted.
2. The revised Capital Programme attached at Appendix A to the report, be noted.
3. The emerging issues for the MTFP be noted.

**CAB  
57/21 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 –24th September 2021  
Safer Stockton Partnership- 1st September 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings listed above be received.

**CAB  
58/21 2021 Event Summary and 2022 Memorial Lighting Calendar**

Cabinet noted the continued impact the COVID pandemic had had on the Council's outdoor events programme in 2021, and the uncertainty/challenges it continued to have for events scheduled for 2022.

Members were provided a brief overview of the event related activity that had taken place in 2021 and on the work of our Independent Safety Advisory Group (ISAG).

The report also provided the suggested calendar for memorial lighting during 2022.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:-

1. Note the success of events delivered during 2021;
2. Approve the proposed memorial lighting calendar for 2022.

## **CAB**      **Bright Minds Big Futures Update**

**59/21**

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:-

- Launched the Pot of Gold Funding stream
- Won a Mayors Civic Award
- Secured £4,250 to support allotment and Norton Green project
- Mental Health social media campaign
- Secret Sound
- Shining Stars – Primary School Newsletter launched
- Held British Youth Council Campaigning Workshop
- Involvement in Stockton on Tees Great Big Green Week
- Secured £1,000 from Virgin Money for development grant
- Completed suicide prevention training and sessions on Mental Health and Drugs and Alcohol
- Working with Primary Schools and local MP's to elect Child MP for Stockton North and Stockton South
- Held session at Conyers School and Oakwood Primary School
- Secured £500 from the ARC to launch new Grow Into Real Leaders campaign
- Shortlisted for Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

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

- Scrutiny committee involvement ;
- Launched Norton Green Eco Project and Stockton on Tees Great Big Green Week;
- Relaunch of BMBF Approved;
- Supporting Public Health in delivering key Covid-19 messages and design of Sexual Health survey;
- Supported the National Market Traders Young Traders Local Heats.

Cabinet commended BMBF on another excellent year's work which was an inspiration to everyone, and thanked Lily and Olivia for their excellent presentation of their work.

## **CAB**      **Annual Report of the Governing Body for the Learning & Skills Service**

**60/21**

Cabinet were provided with 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 during the 20/21 academic year.

The Service was fully funded by external grants allocated by funding bodies including Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) and the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). These grant allocations contributed to the overall

Council financial position and were regularly reviewed through close governance and performance monitoring.

For the 20/21 academic year, government guidance confirmed that classroom based delivery could continue, albeit with capacity significantly reduced due to social distancing requirements. This impacted on curriculum planning and delivery whilst increasing financial pressure. It became apparent through the pandemic that there was a digital divide with those in greatest need unable to access digital services. The Service therefore invested in additional ICT resources to support those without access to a computer and/or network connectivity.

Learners and apprentices had shown tremendous resilience and determination throughout the pandemic and each had done their utmost to complete their programmes and achieve their learning objectives. However, for some learners the adverse effect and pressures of the pandemic on family, health and work commitments had impacted on their achievement rates.

The forecasted achievement rate for Adult Education Budget programmes was 91.5%, of which, the Adult Skills achievement rate is 84.2%. This was a drop of 2.7% compared to 19/20 and 4.9% below the pre-pandemic national benchmark of 89.1%. Participation numbers had also decreased compared to the levels achieved prior to the pandemic.

Cabinet noted the effects of the reduction in participation numbers had increased the risk of funding reconciliation from funding bodies including TVCA and ESFA.

Cabinet also noted details of the Routes to Work programme which was led by Tees Valley Combined Authority and delivered by each local authority. It was a joint funded programme with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

The original aim of the pilot programme was to support up to 2500 people into employment, specifically targeting those aged 30 and over and facing the greatest barriers to employment.

The Learning and Skills Service was the lead provider within Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council with a target to support 625 residents, with 94 individuals progressing into employment by the initial end of the project in March 2021. As at 31st October 2020, the Service had already fully achieved its targets with 667 clients actively supported and 102 individuals successfully entering employment.