

Cabinet

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday, 17th February, 2022.

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, Gary Woods (MD), Beccy Brown, Julie Butcher (HR&L), Martin Gray (CHS), Marc Stephenson (CS&T), Reuben Kench (CL&E), Ann Workman (AH).

Also in attendance: Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Clare Gamble, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Norma Stephenson O.B.E.

Apologies: None

**CAB
73/21** **Evacuation Procedure**

The Evacuation Procedure was noted.

**CAB
74/21** **Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest recorded.

**CAB
75/21** **Minutes of the Meeting held on 20th January 2022-For Approval/Signature**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 20th January 2022 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

**CAB
76/21** **Council Plan 2022-25**

Cabinet was invited to endorse the draft Council Plan 2022-25 for onward approval by full Council.

The Plan set out the Council vision for the Borough looking forward to 2025, and the key priorities the Council would be working on in the coming year to bring the vision to life.

Within the Plan were confirmed aspirations the Council want the Borough to be:

- A place where people are healthy, safe and protected from harm;
- A place that is clean, vibrant and attractive;
- A place with a thriving economy where everyone has opportunities to succeed.

RESOLVED that the draft Council Plan be submitted to full Council for approval.

**CAB
77/21** **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:-

Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board –21st October 2021 – Appendix A
Safer Stockton Partnership- 27th October 2021 – Appendix B
Tees Valley Combined Authority Cabinet – Appendix C

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

**CAB
78/21** **Senior Management - Restructure**

Cabinet was invited to approve a proposed senior management restructure to provide managed transition and take advantage of a combination of opportunities and needs arising from the planned departure of a number of senior employees.

The primary aim of the review was to ensure that the Council maintained high standards of performance and excellent customer service for residents whilst managing change. The succession planning arrangements could be implemented to ensure that upcoming retirements and changes did not have a detrimental impact on service delivery in the short and longer term and focus on delivery of key Council Plan priorities was retained.

The review included the managed transition leading up to the planned retirement of the Managing Director following the elections in May 2023 and also incorporated developments to manage transition for the upcoming retirement of the Director HR, Legal and Communications, the Director of Adults and Health, the recent departure of the Director for Town Centre Development and the Assistant Directors responsible for Democratic Services, Licensing and Administration, HR, Legal and Communications and the Data Protection Officer.

The proposed review included the development of broader Assistant Director roles supporting the transition to a smaller Corporate Management Team (CMT) with balanced portfolios, reducing the number of directors from eight to six. Details of the proposed new senior management structure were provided at Appendix 1 to the report, along with a proposed new structure showing the allocation of services by directorate attached at Appendix 2. The developments also included a return to a single Deputy Managing Director rather than the current shared responsibility.

Cabinet noted that the proposals generated estimated annual savings of £200,000. The total one-off costs associated with the restructuring could not be finalised until the staffing consultation was complete but were estimated to be approximately £550,000 in total over the next 2 financial years. The one-off costs will be paid back within 3 years.

Subject to Cabinet approval, the proposals would be finalised and a formal 30-day consultation with affected employees would undertaken during March. The new structure would be implemented from 1 April with recruitment to the new Assistant Director and Senior Manager posts during April and May. Director appointments would take place over the coming months.

RESOLVED that Cabinet approves the senior management reorganisation proposals set out in the report subject to Council approval of the senior manager exit cost in excess of £100k as required by the Localism Act 2011 and in accordance with Secretary of State guidance regarding severance payments for senior local government employees.

**CAB
79/21**

Annual Report of the Independent Safety Advisory Group (ISAG)

Cabinet received the Annual Report of the Independent Safety Advisory Group (ISAG) for 2021/22.

ISAG brought together a range of professionals to scrutinise and advise upon event safety for outdoor events and looked at plans for a wide range of events in Stockton on Tees. Although ISAG did not take decisions on whether or not an event should go ahead, its recommendations had a significant impact on the Council's decisions to allow an event to take place or require changes to event safety arrangement/plans.

It was noted that the Covid pandemic had significantly interrupted outdoor event work for the past 18 months. During this period ISAG representatives had supported event organisers, reviewing and assessing national guidance and advice in their respective work areas to assist Event Organiser determine what events were permissible under the relevant Covid guidance.

**CAB
80/21**

Crime and Disorder Select Committee - Scrutiny Review of Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs)

Consideration was given to the final report that presented the outcome of the Crime & Disorder Select Committee Scrutiny Review of Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs).

RESOLVED that:-

- 1) SBC and Cleveland Police use their available media platforms (e.g. websites, social media, Stockton News) to reinforce existing mechanisms for reporting ASB and, as a means of countering any negative perceptions around a lack of response to the notification of incidents, communicates operational successes in identifying and addressing ASB within the Borough;
- 2) Consideration is given to an increased dedicated and visible multiagency presence (including the use of recently enhanced SBC Civic Enforcement resources) within the Borough's town centres to support local businesses and reassure residents / visitors in identifying and responding to ASB;
- 3) As part of any future formal PSPO consultation, an easy-read flowchart (such as the draft version in Appendix 3 of the report) of the existing PSPO consultation, implementation and review procedures be included;
- 4) Reassurance be provided that the following key principles and processes of PSPO planning and implementation (as referenced within paragraph j) of the report's conclusion) have been undertaken as part of any future formal consideration around the introduction of a PSPO in the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees:-
 - a) all other avenues of support and / or use of existing powers have been demonstrably exhausted;
 - b) appropriate evidence is in place to justify the introduction of this additional

tool in the fight against ASB;

c) any proposal is clear, targeted, proportional and easily defined to a specific geographical area;

d) a robust and timely plan to inform the public of any future PSPO implementation is outlined;

e) sufficient, visible and sustainable enforcement resources are dedicated to the PSPO area.

5) Adhering to the approach that problem-behaviour is targeted, not a person's status, the implementation of any PSPO does not target homeless individuals for being homeless;

6) SBC adopts a formal definition of 'aggressive begging' as follows:

The action of begging for money or other items in a manner considered to be unreasonably threatening or intimidating, especially when targeting a person due to a perceived vulnerability or in a location such as in the vicinity of ATMs / cashpoints. This includes, but is not limited to, behaviour such as:

- Repeated requests for money or items whilst approaching or following the person from whom the request is made;
- Continuing to make requests for money or items from a person, after the person has refused or implied reluctance to give money or items;
- Using false or misleading information in order to request money or other items;
- Providing or delivering, or attempting to provide, unsolicited services or products with a demand or exertion of pressure for payment in return.

**CAB
81/21**

Investing in Children - Proposals to develop further high quality provision to meet the needs of Children in Care and with additional needs

Cabinet noted the numbers of young children currently in care in Stockton on Tees, and the associated costs of such placement.

It was noted that there were a number of key challenges for the Council in meeting its statutory duty to secure sufficient provision for children in care, namely:

- a. Market 'failure' – nationally the residential children's home 'market' is currently under examination by the Markets and Competition Authority based on concerns about the effectiveness of the market. An initial report has been published which identifies significant issues with the operation of the market currently;
- b. Demand for places currently significantly outstrips supply;
- c. The market is currently provider led
- d. The market is increasingly becoming dominated by similar types of provision, driven by financial considerations and the impact of regulation;
- e. Securing the right provision for the right price;
- f. There are emerging challenges for both public and private sectors around finding sufficiency quality staff to support provision;
- g. Community opposition to new development.

The impact of these issues was that there was still considerable ongoing pressures on Children's Social Care, particularly relating to the costs of children in our care, which was an issue facing the majority of local authorities. Although the number of children in care had stabilised since 2019, it had been necessary to place slightly more children in residential care at additional cost due to the factors listed above and this had led to greater financial strain on the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

As part of the Council's work on sufficiency planning, a number of specific needs had been identified where the market was struggling to meet our requirements, which included more short term placements needed where the intention was to rebuild family or foster care placements; provision needing to be more intensive therapeutic interventions; provision which could deliver bespoke packages of education on site; and provision with an enhanced offer on emotional wellbeing, trauma informed care and a focus on more personalised care and support.

In order to address some of the issues faced, the Council were currently delivering a number of schemes. Our approved capital programme included a scheme to purchase a 4th home for Spark of Genius, as part of the original business case approved by members in 2013. The specific proposals being explored as part of our revised sufficiency plan, and to address issues set out for Children in our Care were:

- a. The Council to create up to 10 new places 'in house', focusing on more provision to support families and manage shorter periods in care. This would include:
 - i). A new 3-4 bed provision to work alongside Our Place as our edge of care and short stay provision;
 - ii). Remodel Oak View as a short stay facility to work alongside our existing turnaround provision;
 - iii). Opening of a new 4 bed home on Bishopton Road for longer stay;
 - iv). New intensive support approach – up to 3 smaller provisions managed as one;

- b. The Spark of Genius Joint Venture to:
 - i). Develop 4th home provision as planned;
 - ii). Develop a '5th house' to focus on learning disability / autism. The proposal currently being developed was for provision to meet the needs of children and young people with communication and interaction issues / autism and / or learning difficulties. These type of provision could be delivered through a 3-5 bed type provision and so would form a natural extension of the current business model;
 - iii). Develop longer term option for purpose built provision with attached school.

Members were advised that the working assumptions were around £900,000 for the proposed 5th house as part of the Joint Venture and £900,000 to support a new 'in house' 3-4 bed provision and for the intensive support approach.

Future proposals, including those outlined above, would need to be supported by a business case clear about the benefits and financial implications. Work to

develop this was underway and would be brought back to Cabinet to support the drawdown of any agreed capital allocation.

Members noted that consideration had also been given to the opportunity to develop further provision for pupils with additional educational needs. There was a an equivalent set of market issues in terms of special school placements, with an active private sector market, including the development of new provision in the Borough. Despite this, demand outstripped supply currently.

Extensive market analysis had therefore been undertaken as part of the regional work on placements, demand and costs. A regional sufficiency strategy was being developed to provide the basis for future planning.

The Council had also made recent investment in the development of more early years provision, creation of an extra 32 places at Abbey Hill Academy Trust and the development of an independent special school provision in the old Kiora Hall building, as well as the forthcoming Tees Valley Free School, located in Redcar and Cleveland.

A key immediate strand was to secure the expansion of King Edwin School. This included:

- a. Funding for expansion (on site) to allow an increase of 36 young people in the pupil roll;
- b. Funding for maintenance and upgrade works to enable the school to continue to compete with nearby independent special schools which could have an impact on occupancy in the short to medium term.

The outline business case for expansion was based on the following:

- a. An extension to the current school building to create more places. The plan was to expand the capacity of the school to 120. The school had initially been constructed for 50 pupils, but had been able to accommodate 80 without significant additional investment.
- b. Improving and increasing communal space and a focus on improve pupil experience and circulation in the buildings together with additional building enhancements to enable King Edwin to effectively compete with other local provision.

Such an expansion plan would allow for more children to receive a high quality specialist education within the Borough, whilst the additional income generated was anticipated to cover the borrowing costs. The outline business case anticipated a capital cost of up to £4.2m, funded by prudential borrowing. The outline business case indicated that the savings and income generated would more than offset the borrowing costs over the period of the loan. A final business case was being developed and this would confirm the overall position and it was suggested that this be delegated to the Director of Children's Services & the Director of Finance, Development & Business Services in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

It was also proposed that additional work be undertaken to seek to expand educational provision further, potentially on a separate site at a new location, again taking into account the needs of children being identified through the SEND sufficiency assessment work. There was also considerable interest in

developing a form of provision which was focused on a trauma informed way of working, which could be developed as part of King Edwin or as a separate provision.

Future proposals, including those outlined above, would again need to be supported by a business case which was clear about the benefits and financial implications. Work to develop this was underway and would be brought back to Cabinet to support the drawdown of any agreed capital allocation.

Cabinet noted that in summary, the proposals for borrowing were based on:

- a. £900,000K for additional 'in house' provision;
- b. £900,000 for a specialist autism and learning difficult provision through the Joint Venture;
- c. £4.2m for the expansion of King Edwin School.

RESOLVED that:-

1. Cabinet agree the proposed strategy and note that prudential borrowing of £6m will be recommended for inclusion into the Medium Term Financial Plan, to be considered at the meeting of Council on 23rd February 22;
2. Drawdown of this amount to be subject to further reports to Cabinet on the basis that the cost of borrowing will be fully covered;
3. Cabinet agree that consideration of the final business case and drawdown of the funding for King Edwin expansion be delegated to the Director of Children's Services & the Director of Finance, Development & Business Services in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

**CAB
82/21**

LA 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:-

- Holy Trinity Primary School - Councillor Niall Innes (School Nomination);
- Fairfield Primary School - Councillor Maurice Perry (School Nomination)
- St John the Baptist Primary School - Vacancy

RESOLVED that the proposed appointments are made to the vacant Governorships in line with agreed procedures subject to a Personal Disclosure and DBS clearance.