

CABINET

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday 16 November 2023.

Present: Cllr Robert Cook (Leader), Cllr Nigel Cooke (Cabinet Member), Cllr Lisa Evans (Cabinet Member), Cllr Clare Gamble (Cabinet Member), Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy (Cabinet Member), Cllr Steve Nelson (Cabinet Member) and Cllr Norma Stephenson OBE (Cabinet Member).

Officers: Mike Greene (CE), Garry Cummings (DCE&F, T&P), Ged Morton, Geraldine Brown, Jonathan Nertney, Fiona Srogi, Peter Bell (CS), Elaine Redding (ChS), Reuben Kench (CS,E&C), Carolyn Nice, Sarah Bowman-Abouna, Marc Stephenson (A,H&W) and Marc Cole (R&IG).

Also in attendance: Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Marc Besford and Cllr Carol Clark

Apologies: , .

CAB/43/23 Evacuation Procedure

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and the evacuation procedure was noted.

CAB/44/23 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

CAB/45/23 Minutes

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2023.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2023 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

CAB/46/23 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:-

TVCA Cabinet – 22 September 2023
TSAB – 14 June 2023

RESOLVED that the minutes be received.

CAB/47/23 Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2023

Consideration was given to a report that set out the proposed changes for polling districts and places taking into account the submission of the Acting Returning Officer

and feedback received from the consultation. The consultation ended on 29 October 2023.

Each Local Authority was required to carry out reviews of Polling Districts and Polling Places in its area.

The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 changed the timing of these reviews and reviews must be held within a 16-month period starting on 1 October every fifth year after 1 October 2013. Ward boundaries were unaffected by the review.

The Council's last statutory review was carried out in 2018 and an interim review was held in 2022 when a number of changes were made as a result of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England Ward Boundary Review. The changes approved by Council on 23 November 2022 were implemented and in place for the May 2023 local elections held in the Borough.

A Council's area was divided into polling districts with one or more districts making up a ward, with a polling place being the area or building within a polling district in which a polling station is situated. The Council must identify the polling districts and polling places within the Borough. The (Acting) Returning Officer is responsible for identifying the polling stations within the polling place.

The Electoral Commission Guidance was detailed within the report.

Polling districts changes had been considered to include existing and future Parliamentary boundaries. This would be achieved by merging into appropriate adjoining polling districts as identified in the 2022 review and keeping some small polling districts that due to the geography of the Parliamentary Boundary were unsuitable to combine with neighbouring polling districts. The review considerations were outlined within the report.

During the 2023 Elections, the opportunity was taken to complete the Electoral Commission's evaluation templates in order to assess the suitability/ accessibility of the polling place/ station. Presiding Officers were also asked to record any complaints/comments received.

The Boundary Commission had undertaken electorate projections as part of the Parliamentary Boundary Review 2023 and the Local Government Ward Boundary Review 2022. The recommendations take into consideration these predictions as well as the increase in postal voters that we have seen since 2021.

The Returning Officer's submission summarised the existing arrangements, key issues identified from the 2023 Elections, any notable projected changes in electorate and makes proposals for changes to polling districts / places.

Mobile polling stations continued to be used where no alternative venues could be found. Mobiles stations were expensive and unpopular with voters and suggestions for alternative venues were always welcomed. The use of some schools as polling stations continued to be a problem when the safeguarding of children cannot in the view of the schools be assured, and in these circumstances alternative venues had been identified. The proposals considered Electoral Commission Guidance that the number of electors allocated to a particular polling station should not exceed 2,250

and also the introduction of Voter Identification which was more resource intensive on polling day.

Any further feedback and comments from the 2024 Elections in relation to the suitability of existing polling stations would be considered in the planning for future electoral events and statutory reviews.

The consultation was published on 1 October 2023 with a closing date for comments of midnight on 29 October 2023. The Acting Returning Officers submission summarised the existing arrangements and their proposals to reduce the number of polling districts by 8, by merging a number of polling places that use the same polling place and keeping 5 smaller polling districts due to the changes in Parliamentary Boundaries.

RECOMMENDED to Council the changes to Polling Districts and Polling Places, as outlined in the Acting Returning Officers recommendations, incorporating the responses to the comments laid out in the table within the report.

CAB/48/23 Winter Planning Update

Consideration was given to a report that gave a winter planning update.

The report provided an update on Winter planning work across the Council, working with partners. This included measures in place across Adult Social Care (ASC) to respond to Winter pressures and the associated increase in service demands.

Winter 2022/23 presented significant challenges to communities and the health and wellbeing system with cost-of-living pressures, ongoing Covid circulation, flu and other respiratory infections.

To protect vulnerable groups at greater risk, the national decision was taken to start vaccination for flu and COVID on 11th September 2023, starting with care homes and over 75-year-olds. An attachment to the report set out eligible groups. Vaccines were being evolved constantly in response to the virus.

Community pharmacies also offered flu and Covid vaccinations to those who were eligible. Flu vaccinations could also be purchased from community pharmacies by population groups who were not eligible for a free flu jab through the NHS. Covid vaccinations were not available for purchase. A list of community pharmacies who had signed up to offer COVID-19 and Flu vaccines was attached to the report.

An attachment to the report set out eligible groups for the flu vaccine. Flu vaccinations for 2-3-year-olds, school-age children (reception to year 11) and children in clinical risk groups started in September, delivered by the school immunisation service and aiming to finish by 15th December 2023.

In addition to the activities detailed within the report the Council (working with its partners across the VCSE sector) had a range of ongoing activities which would support the borough's residents, specifically those who were experiencing hardship due to the current cost of living challenge. These were detailed within the report.

Beyond continuing the work described in this report, key updates or proposed changes in approach (e.g. in response to a new threat to population health) would be brought to the Corporate Management Team and Cabinet as needed.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

CAB/49/23 Major Incident Plan 2023-2026

Consideration was given to a report on the Major Incident Plan 2023/2026.

By law the Council had a responsibility to prepare and maintain a Major Incident Plan outlining the Council role during the life saving and recovery phases of an incident. The Council were supported in doing this by the joint authority's arrangement which was known as the Emergency Planning Unit, who provided specialist advice and support in the preparation and maintenance of the plan.

Under the Civil Contingencies Act, the Council was duty bound to frequently review the major incident plan to ensure it was fit for purpose and adequacy considers the known risks and appropriate responses available within Stockton on Tees. A copy of the Major Incident Plan 2023/2026 was attached to the report.

RESOLVED that the Major Incident Plan 2023/2026 be agreed.

CAB/50/23 Director of Public Health Annual Report

Consideration was given to a report on the Director of Public Health Annual Report.

Under the Health and Social Care Act (2012), the Director of Public Health had a duty to prepare an independent annual report. As across local authorities nationally, there was a hiatus in producing these reports due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequently due to the recovery work to stand back up core public health duties and services and catch-up key work which had been achieved.

The Director of Public Health Annual Report 2022 aimed to capture an overview of key activity from a public health perspective, over the course of the unique and challenges events of the Covid-19 pandemic. It also sought to summarise the learning from this period from a public health perspective and describe some of the activity since, in response to this learning.

Recovery across the health and wellbeing system and society continued and learning would continue to be embedded in the approach of public health going forward, working with partners.

The report described some of the key work undertaken with partners and communities during the course of the pandemic and the actions since. Working alongside communities and Elected Members was an essential part of the local public health response.

Embedding learning and monitoring of public health activity would continue to be overseen and reported through the Lead Member, Corporate Management Team and Health and Wellbeing Board as part of core business.

RECOMMENDED to Council that the Director of Public Health Annual Report be received.