

## **CABINET**

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday 18 July 2024.

**Present:** Cllr Robert Cook (Leader), Cllr Pauline Beall (Cabinet Member), Cllr Nigel Cooke (Cabinet Member), Cllr Clare Besford (Cabinet Member), Cllr Steve Nelson (Cabinet Member) and Cllr Norma Stephenson OBE (Cabinet Member).

**Officers:** Mike Greene, Garry Cummings, Reuben Kench, Majella McCarthy, Ged Morton, Ian Coxon, Jane Edmends, Clare Harper, Eddie Huntington, Chris Renahan, Julie Butcher and Peter Bell.

**Also in attendance:** Cllr Marc Besford, Cllr Lynn Hall and Cllr Sylvia Walmsley

**Apologies:** Cllr Lisa Evans (Cabinet Member).

### **CAB/25/24 Evacuation Procedure**

The evacuation procedure was published.

### **CAB/26/24 Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Steve Nelson declared a Other Registerable Interest in respect of agenda item 7 - Central Stockton and North Thornaby Blueprint as he was a member of Tees Active Board. Councillor Steve Nelson withdrew from the meeting and left the room during consideration of the item.

### **CAB/27/24 Minutes**

The minutes were approved and signed as a correct record.

### **CAB/28/24 Medium Term Financial Plan Outturn March 2024**

Consideration was given to a report on the draft financial performance and position as at 31 March 2024.

The overall financial position was similar to the position projected at the end of December 2023, as outlined in the Budget report in February 2024, with a variance of £163,000 from the previously reported position.

Actions taken to manage the overspend of £7m were agreed as part of the budget report, and the position had continued to be carefully monitored.

Members were aware of the financial pressures going forward with the Powering our Futures Programme integral to identifying opportunities for resolving the gap. Further reports would be presented throughout the year providing updates.

The Capital Programme had been updated to incorporate new schemes and reflect those schemes completed as at the financial year end.

RESOLVED that the outturn position for the year ended 31 March 2024 and the updated Capital Programme be noted.

#### **CAB/29/24 Xentrall Annual Report 2023-24**

Consideration was given to a report on the progress and performance of Xentrall Shared Services, the Stockton and Darlington partnership and demonstrated how Xentrall had delivered savings whilst continuing to improve performance and deliver strategic projects.

Xentrall Shared Services, the Stockton and Darlington partnership, was established in May 2008 and in its seventeenth year. The Xentrall services were:

- ICT (strategy and operations)
- Transactional HR (payroll, pensions, recruitment, sickness absence)
- Transactional Finance (creditors, debtors, banking, schools finance)
- Design & Print (professional buyer, in-house design and print)

The original business case identified a number of efficiencies and benefits to be delivered resulting in initial savings of £7.4m over the original ten-year period of the partnership. The successful partnership arrangement had delivered all these plus additional efficiencies and benefits and significant additional savings as reported to Members over previous years. At the same time the quality and performance of services had not been compromised but improved, with both customer and staff satisfaction increasing over the life of the partnership.

This was a significant achievement for a public/public partnership and it compared very well to other private sector partnerships many of which had failed over the same period or been brought back in-house and for a variety of reasons. Both Councils had benefited both financially and through a continued programme of service improvements brought throughout the lifetime of the partnership.

#### **CAB/30/24 Central Stockton & North Thornaby Blueprint**

Consideration was given to a report on the Central Stockton and North Thornaby Blueprint.

In July 2023 an update was provided to Cabinet on the Council's ambitious regeneration programme alongside a series of next steps for place-based economic development and growth. The report recognised the importance of ensuring our town centres are prosperous, vibrant places that were fit for future generations as this was key to attracting investment, creating opportunities, and improving outcomes for

communities across Stockton-on-Tees. Alongside this it was noted that the level of ambition shown was attracting significant interest from private developers, who were keen to be involved in the next phases of design and development.

The report provided an update on progress and sought approval for the recently completed 'Central Stockton and North Thornaby Blueprint' which set out the vision and development framework for transformational change over the next 25 years.

The Blueprint was attached to the report and set out an exciting and innovative vision for the future development of Central Stockton and North Thornaby areas.

It outlined plans to ensure transformational change over the next 25 years by creating prosperous, vibrant places fit for future generations by delivering modern, mixed-use neighbourhoods and a stronger town centre helping to make sure it was a safe and welcoming place where people want to work, live and visit.

The ambitious Blueprint had been developed through extensive consultation with residents, businesses, partner organisations and stakeholders, including young people from Stockton Riverside College. It focused on eight key intervention areas in Central Stockton and North Thornaby they were:

- 1) Town Centre (south)
- 2) Town Centre (north)
- 3) Municipal Quarter
- 4) Castlegate Quay
- 5) Prince Regent Quarter
- 6) Waterways
- 7) North Shore
- 8) Tees Valley Care and Health Innovation Zone

The Blueprint built on the ambitious regeneration already under way in Stockton town centre to transform the Castlegate Shopping Centre site into Stockton Waterfront urban park and reconnecting the town centre to the river. As well as seeking Cabinet's approval of the Blueprint, the report asked Cabinet to consider and approve in principle the next steps for four individual projects within the Stockton Central and North Thornaby Blueprint areas.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The Blueprint for Stockton and North Thornaby as the strategic framework to guide development and investment decisions specifically in Central Stockton and North Thornaby be approved.
2. The retention of Splash as Stockton's central leisure centre be agreed and agreement be given in principle to invest in extending its operational lifespan. This includes necessary internal refurbishment and reconfiguration to expand gym provision. A detailed report on the budget

allocation be presented to a future Cabinet meeting.

3. The work undertaken on Stockton Town Hall be noted and agreement be given in principle to its refurbishment to accommodate a modern registrars service. A detailed report on the budget allocation be presented to a future Cabinet meeting.

4. The work undertaken on the Municipal Quarter be noted and approval be given in principle the establishment of a joint venture between TVCA and SBC to invest in the Municipal Quarter. An allocation of up to £450,000 for associated feasibility work be approved. A detailed report on the budget allocation to enable full progression of the proposals be presented to a future Cabinet meeting.

5. The work undertaken on options for a Council Chamber and dedicated space for elected members and notes the feedback from the members' advisory panel be noted. Agreement be given to locate the Council Chamber and dedicated space for elected members in Dunedin House. A detailed report on the budget allocation be presented to a future Cabinet meeting.

#### **CAB/31/24 Enhanced Support for Care Experienced Young People**

Consideration was given to a report that recommended measures aimed at enhancing the support provided to care experienced young people within Stockton-on-Tees. The proposals included recognising 'Care Experienced' as a locally protected characteristic, an employability support pledge from the Council, a pilot corporate rent guarantor scheme and the funding of shortfall in private rental tenancies. These measures aimed to improve housing, employability prospects, and overall support for care experienced young people, ensuring their needs were appropriately prioritised in decision-making. The measures would support the Council to fulfil its role as a corporate parent.

Recommend to Council that:-

1. 'Care Experienced' is formally recognised as a locally protected characteristic within the Borough, ensuring that the needs of care experienced young people are prioritised in all Council decision-making processes.

RESOLVED that:-

2. Additional employability support for care experienced young people aged 16-25 be endorsed, including prioritised access to apprenticeship and job vacancies, guaranteed interviews for those meeting essential criteria, and the Council's commitment to the national Care Leaver Covenant.

3. A pilot Corporate Rent Guarantor scheme for our care experienced young people be approved.

4. The pilot will inform a more detailed business case. An evaluation report be presented after the 12-month pilot.

## **CAB/32/24 Anti-Poverty Strategy**

Consideration was given to a report that provided a progress update on both the Anti-Poverty Strategy (and supporting Action Plan) and revised Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment (EPIA). Both areas of work supported the Fairer Stockton-on-Tees strategic framework and the Powering Our Future programme.

Tackling poverty was key to supporting the Council's commitment to addressing inequality as detailed in both the Council Plan 2023-26 and the Fairer Stockton-on-Tees Strategic Framework.

The draft 3-year Strategy and 18 month Action Plan had been developed with those affected by poverty, and in collaboration with wider VCSE partners. Co-production had been informed by a 'bottom up' approach, ensuring that residents with lived experience had been directly involved in formulating this work. This had resulted in the creation of a lived experience group, the 'Positive Living Forum', a name which was chosen by group members.

Strategy development had been supported by a stakeholder group (Anti-Poverty Delivery Group) which met monthly and included representatives from both external partners and internal service teams (CAB, Thrive, Welfare Support, Family Action, Employment & Training Hub, Thirteen, Catalyst, Family Hubs & Public Health). The Anti-Poverty Delivery Group also agreed to gather views from their service users.

In addition, other 'conversations' which had informed this work had included working alongside Thrive (an anti-poverty organisation), focus groups with those with lived experience, feedback from surveys undertaken and feedback from a range of partnerships i.e. Infinity and the network of Community Partnerships.

The Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan included a range of previously agreed and proposed actions to be delivered to support those affected by the current Cost of Living situation. The Action Plan brings together these ongoing activities with new priority actions to ensure synergy and avoid duplication.

The work undertaken by the Council in response to the Cost of Living challenges had been subject to a recent scrutiny review (undertaken by the People Select Committee). Recommendations from this scrutiny review also supported the development of the Anti-Poverty Action Plan.

The action plan would be co-ordinated by the FSOT Team and would be delivered by a range of partners across the Borough, with oversight to be undertaken by the Anti-Poverty Delivery group and Positive Living Forum.

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council had a long-standing commitment to

promote equality, celebrate diversity and advance inclusion. It was intended that the new EPIA's were introduced to further embed this approach into the Council's decision making and business planning processes.

The major change to previous EPIA was the inclusion of (a) Poverty / (b) Care Experienced and (c) Substance misuse in addition to the wider protected characteristics. This was intended to ensure that the decision-making processes include a 'poverty lens'. For example, the EPIA template would ensure a high-level assessment of poverty impact, and where it was identified that there was a disproportionate impact related to the proposals, a more in-depth analysis and stakeholder engagement can be expected to be undertaken. Progress to date was included within the report.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The attached Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan and the wide range of planned activity to be undertaken with our local communities, VSCE and broader partners be approved.
2. The current work being undertaken to develop a new Equality & Poverty Impact Assessment approach be noted.

#### **CAB/33/24 Defibrillator Policy**

Consideration was given to a report that set out the need for good access to public access defibrillators in the local population, identified areas of need for further defibrillators and shared a policy which clarified the responsibilities of the Council in relation to the purchase, maintenance and installation of defibrillators.

RESOLVED that the defibrillator policy be approved as set out in this report, for Stockton-on-Tees.

#### **CAB/34/24 School Term and Holiday Dates 2025-2026**

Consideration was given to a report School Term and Holiday Dates for 2025/2026 Academic Year.

Following consultation, the proposed calendars of school term and holiday dates for 2025/2026 academic year were presented.

School employers were required to set the term dates of their school year. Employers were:

- the Local Authority in maintained, voluntary controlled and maintained special schools.
- the Governing Body in foundation and voluntary aided schools.
- Multi Academy Trusts, academies and free schools.

In line with statutory requirements and the protocol agreed in 2008, consideration had been given to compile a set of term and holiday dates for schools in the Borough.

Officers consulted with colleagues from all neighbouring authorities to endeavour to reach consensus on a proposed model for the academic year.

Attached to the report were the proposed dates for 2025/2026.

As part of the consultation process the document was duly circulated to schools/academies and all other relevant parties, including Diocesan Authorities and Trade Unions/Teaching Associations. There were no comments received.

To date the neighbouring authorities that had published their dates had endorsed the proposed matrix for 2025/2026. This level of agreement between authorities would relieve many of the cross-boundary issues that some families had suffered in the past.

RESOLVED that the school term and holiday dates 2025/2026 shown at Appendix 1 of the report, be agreed.

#### **CAB/35/24 Local Authority Governors on School/Academy Governing Bodies**

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 nominations to school / academy Governing Bodies listed in the Appendix to the report.

RESOLVED that the following appointments be made to the vacant Governorships in line with agreed procedures subject to a Personal Disclosure and DBS clearance:-

Fairfield Primary School - Lucy Duncan  
Durham Lane Primary School - Maureen Rigg