

Cabinet

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday, 13th July, 2023.

Present: Cllr Robert Cook (Chair), Cllr Nigel Cooke, Cllr Lisa Evans, Cllr Clare Gamble, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr Steve Nelson and Cllr Norma Stephenson O.B.E.

Officers: Mike Greene (CE), Ged Morton, Julie Butcher, Jonathan Nertney, Geraldine Brown, Judy Trainer (CS), Garry Cummings, (F,D&R&DCE), Martin Gray (ChS), Reuben Kench (CS,E&C), Carolyn Nice, Sarah Bowman-Abouna (A&H).

Also in attendance: Cllr Pauline Beall (Assistant Cabinet Member), Cllr Marc Besford (Assistant Cabinet Member), Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Ted Strike.
Members of the public.

Apologies: None.

CAB 9/23 Welcome and Evacuation Procedure

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

CAB 10/23 Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared.

CAB 11/23 Minutes

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2023.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2023 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

CAB 12/23 Medium Term Financial Plan - Draft Outturn March 2023

Consideration was given to a report that updated Cabinet on the draft financial performance and position as at 31 March 2023.

Overall there was an improvement in the draft outturn 2022/23 financial position compared to that projected at December of around £200,000.

The Report highlighted the inflationary pressures being experienced by local authorities and set out that these would be considered further in future MTFP update reports.

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

RESOLVED that the draft outturn position for the year ended 31 March 2023 and the updated Capital Programme be noted.

CAB
13/23 **Powering our Future Report**

Consideration was given to a report that built on existing programmes of activity, including Fairer Stockton-on-Tees and the Transformation Programme (set out in the Medium Term Financial Plan, agreed at Cabinet in February 2023). It provided further detail about how these initiatives would be achieved, as part of a comprehensive approach to strategic planning, transformation and delivery for the Council.

Following the Council elections in May and confirmation of the new administration, it was timely to set out a refreshed strategic planning process to deliver Members' ambitions for the future of the Borough.

The report set out how this brought together existing and planned areas of activity to 'Power our Future', improving outcomes for Our People, Our Place and Our Economy. It was proposed that delivery was based around a long-term Vision for the Borough that be developed collaboratively with communities and puts them at the heart of everything the Council worked towards.

The recommendations in the report recognised that Stockton-on-Tees was a high performing council. However, in order to maintain excellence and respond to growing community and service pressures, the Council would need to adapt and accelerate delivery. The report identified headline Objectives to 'Power our Future', and provided detail on relevant areas of activity including:

Developing a new and ambitious long-term Vision for the future of the Borough. Led by communities and empowering them to identify the place they want to live and spend time. This would begin a new, on-going 'conversation' with residents to set shared ambitions and inform approaches to delivery.

Council Plan – developing a new Council Plan focused on People, Place and Economy. This would provide a framework to deliver the Vision developed with communities, including key deliverables and measurable outcomes. It will drive prioritisation and future service planning.

Working with partners – confirming a shared Vision and developing collaborative approaches to delivery that remove organisational boundaries to meet the needs of individuals. An inclusive and streamlined approach can ensure that the Council maximise the impact of shared resources.

Fit for Future – focusing on the areas where the Council need to do things differently over the short, medium and longer term, including:

- Service Transformations - ensuring that the council delivers excellent and efficient services that are financially sustainable and reduce inequality
- Powered by Communities – an asset based community development approach that works with communities to shape and drive our priorities, actions and monitoring through understanding and acting upon: What communities can do best; What communities require help with; What communities need outside

agencies to do for them

- Fairer Stockton-on-Tees – the Council’s strategic framework to reduce inequalities, address the underlying causes of poverty whilst focusing activity on our most deprived neighbourhoods

- Powering our People through Workforce Development – ensuring we have a workforce that is fit for the future by investing in, supporting and developing our staff, attracting and retaining a talented and committed workforce empowered to deliver services and work with communities.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The overall approach to strategic planning and delivery set out in this report be agreed.
2. The Powering our Future Objectives set out within the report be agreed.
3. The Powering our Future Principles set out within the report be agreed.
4. A Big Conversation take place with communities to develop a Vision for the future, from September 2023.
5. A new approach be agreed to strategic planning being introduced during 2023 leading to a new Corporate Plan being approved in June 2024.
6. The Council establish a Place Leadership Board to develop our approach to joint working with partners.
7. Progress be noted and future plans be agreed for the Transformation Programme, focused on Outcome-based Reviews, Service Reviews and delivering improvements in Children’s Services.
8. The alignment of Fairer Stockton-on-Tees with the Powering Our Future programme and the medium-term priority actions that will be progressed to address inequality in the Borough be noted.
9. Asset Based Community Development - an approach be agreed and programme of work is developed to embed working with our communities and partners in all that we do, based on their strengths and resources - to shape and drive our priorities, actions and monitoring of impact.
10. The development of a Workforce Strategy and Action Plan be agreed to ensure we have a workforce that can support and deliver services which are fit for the future and that a further report be presented to Cabinet.

**CAB
14/23**

Vibrant and Thriving Town Centres - Regeneration Update

Consideration was given to a report on the Council’s ambitious regeneration programme and outlined proposed next steps for place-based economic development and growth.

Ensuring the Borough's town centres are prosperous, vibrant places that are fit for future generations was key to attracting investment, creating opportunities, and improving outcomes for communities across Stockton-on-Tees.

The level of ambition was attracting significant interest from private developers, who were keen to be involved in the next phase of design and development. The report provided an update on progress to date, along with proposals to confirm future focus. It included:

- A progress report on regeneration plans for Stockton Town Centre, Thornaby and Billingham
- A proposal to consider future facilities in Stockton Town Centre, including options for the leisure centre, library and register office as well as proposing plans for the historic Town Hall and Shambles
- An update on the redevelopment of Dunedin House and our Office Accommodation Strategy
- An update on the Thornaby Town Deal and in particular the potential requirement to provide a loan to enable the development of NETA facilities
- Proposals to see a Sports Hub created in Billingham on the former Billingham Campus site

The report also considered the strategic importance of areas with further development potential, including Teesdale Business Park and the Marshalling Yards.

Building on work to date, the report proposed that regeneration blueprints be developed for each of the six towns, which would outline the vision and future strategy for these areas. The blueprints would be used to promote and inform future investment and form the basis for detailed masterplans for key sites where appropriate.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The development of regeneration blueprints for our six town centres outlining a regeneration narrative and development strategy be approved. This includes an externally commissioned blueprint for Stockton Town Centre and Teesdale.
2. The preparation of development briefs be approved and agreement to undertake more formal engagement with potential development partner/s for:
 - a. The current Municipal Buildings site and surrounding area. This should consider options for retaining/incorporating the current Stockton Central Library site
 - b. The Stockton Waterfront site adjacent to the urban park

3. Options be re-assessed for the future leisure offer for Stockton Town Centre as a component of the Stockton and Teesdale blueprint
4. The development of a Masterplan and business case be approved for development at Teesdale, based around potential for a Care and Health Zone
5. The repurposing of the Town Hall be approved in principle and the principle of re-locating the Register Office and service into the building.
6. A further report be brought once plans have been developed to allocate the funding, which is currently approved for the town centre redevelopments
7. The commitment be confirmed to supporting redevelopment in Billingham Town Centre and the work underway to assess redevelopment options for Billingham in light of the unsuccessful Levelling Up Bid be noted.
8. The allocation be approved of £4m from the £6m provided from the Tees Valley Combined Authority to help drive economic growth in Billingham as part of their refreshed 10-year investment plan in July 2022 to support the development of the Sports Hub on the former Billingham Campus site.
9. Work ongoing with Education Training Collective (ETC) to explore funding options to support the redevelopment of the NETA facility as part of Thornaby Town Deal be noted and agreement to recommend a loan of up to £4m with a further report to Council seeking formal approval should a loan be required.
10. The revised cost estimate be approved and the revised funding profile be agreed to deliver the Office Accommodation Strategy.

CAB
15/23 **Indigenous Growth Fund Update**

Consideration was given to a report that provided an update on the Indigenous Growth Fund (IGF) Strategic Initiatives Programme including progress to date, changes in the economic market, and proposed programme reprofiling to stimulate inward investment, support inclusive growth, and be a catalyst for job creation across the borough using the IGF that the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) has allocated to the Council.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The reprofiled IGF Strategic Initiatives Programme at table 2 be approved and the allocation of resources from the Indigenous Growth Fund be noted.
2. Delegated authority be given to the Director of Finance, Development and Regeneration and Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing for expenditure of the initiative's defined in the programme.
3. Delegation be given to the Director of Finance, Development and

Regeneration and Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing the authority to amend the value of individual initiatives within the overall scope of the total IGF allocation to meet future market demand.

CAB Powering our Future - Senior Management Capacity Review

16/23

Consideration was given to a report on a proposal for a restructuring of the senior management of the Council (Corporate Management Team) and included the creation of a new directorate including the recruitment of a new Director post to optimise senior leadership capacity, ensure the delivery of our ambitious economic growth programme and the Powering our Future Programme provide capacity to deliver on the agreed ambitions of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

In order to ensure effective senior leadership during this period of transformation and change and to ensure that council priorities are delivered, changes were required to the Council's current senior management structure. This would see the creation of one additional director and a rebalancing of portfolios across the corporate management team. The proposed changes would provide additional strategic leadership and focus, in addition to providing support to members and the Chief Executive to lead and deliver the Council's transformation, regeneration and growth plans.

The proposals identify that separating out the regeneration and place making functions from the council's finance functions and transformation programme would increase capacity and focus enhance efficiency, effectiveness, and transparency resulting in overall better outcomes for communities and the borough as a whole. The fundamental issue in bringing forward these proposals was that there was a lack of senior capacity and therefore the ability to deliver and continue delivering over the medium to longer term was at risk unless this is strengthened.

Services 'in scope' of the new Regeneration and Growth directorate include:-

- Place development
- Economic Development
- Major Projects
- Highways Design
- Property/Assets/FM
- Planning and Building Control
- Learning and Skills

It was proposed that these services form the core of the new directorate. The review also considered that fairer Stockton on Tees and strategic housing could be better delivered if more closely aligned with the existing adults and health portfolio. As this change was only relatively minor, in terms of the number of employees affected, it had already been made under delegated powers by changing line management responsibilities.

Services 'in scope' of the revised Finance, Transformation and Performance directorate included:-

- Finance
- Revenues, Benefits and Welfare
- Xentrall
- Powering our Future Programme
- Strategic Planning and Performance

In addition, the additional responsibilities also of the Deputy Chief Executive would remain.

The process to introduce a new director would take some time, usually at least 6 months (or more) for a senior level recruitment, therefore be necessary to put in place some interim arrangements whilst that process begins.

There was a recognition that as the transformation programme delivered out, that the management capacity needed by the council would need to flex and change. The report therefore recognised that at the culmination of the transformation programme it was likely to be necessary to take a fresh look at senior capacity at that time.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The post of Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth be created with the responsibilities as set out within the report.
2. The modifications to the role of the Director Finance, Development and Regeneration and Deputy Chief Executive including a change in job title to Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Finance, Transformation & Performance with the responsibilities as set out within the report be approved.
3. The Chief Executive be delegated to make whatever arrangements are necessary to implement the new directorate structures, including any necessary changes to responsibilities at or below director level.

CAB
17/23 **Volunteering Policy**

Consideration was given to a report on the Council's Volunteering Policy.

In recognition of the importance of volunteering to the Borough's residents and communities Cabinet considered an approach to employer supported volunteering, that encompassed employee volunteering leave of absence, volunteering as part of a team development day and employer organised volunteering opportunities.

In July 2021 Cabinet endorsed 'People Power: A Volunteering Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees 2021 to 2026'. This Volunteering Strategy was co-produced by the Council and Catalyst with the aim of informing, supporting, and developing volunteering within the borough.

The vision detailed in the Volunteering Strategy was to ensure that the Council had a borough where:

- More people will be sharing their skills and talents for the good of the community through volunteering.
- Volunteering in the Borough will be a positive experience for volunteers and the people and organisations they volunteer with.
- The contribution volunteers make to the Borough will be recognised and celebrated.

The Council's current leave of absence policy provided employees with the ability to request unpaid leave to undertake volunteering in work time. Subject to Cabinet approval it was proposed to introduce a new employee policy, this specifically outlined the commitment to supporting employees to volunteer within the borough of Stockton-on-Tees in work time. A full copy of the proposed Employee Volunteering Policy was attached to the report.

The policy would also form part of the approach to Stockton Futures. By encouraging and supporting Council employees to take time of work to volunteer in our community we will be supporting the principles of:

- Empowered communities - Understanding our communities & helping them to thrive in the way that they choose;
- Collaborate with communities – starting a new conversation with residents & communities to describe what we want the Borough to be like in future;
- Positive conversations - Focussing on the strengths of people & communities;
- People Centric – removing organisational boundaries to ensure that we meet the needs of individuals ;
- Equality - Aiming to reduce inequality across the Borough in everything we do;
- Doing things differently - Developing creative & original ways to make a difference;
- Stronger together - Developing a shared understanding of what we can do together to have the biggest impact.

RESOLVED that the Employee Volunteering Policy be approved.

CAB
18/23

Electoral Update

Consideration was given to a report that provided feedback from the Local and Parish Elections in May 2023 and gave an update on the further implementation of the Elections Act 2022.

The next scheduled elections were the Police and Crime Commissioner Elections and Tees Valley Mayoral Elections in May 2024. Stockton would again be the lead for these elections and preliminary planning work would commence shortly. In addition, the next Parliamentary Elections would need to be held by

28 January 2025. It was likely that the Parliamentary elections would be on new boundaries and in Stockton's case, constituency boundaries would be shared with Middlesbrough and Darlington.

**CAB
19/23** **Modern Slavery Statement**

Consideration was given to a report on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement.

The Council was committed to preventing slavery and human trafficking in the delivery of its services and corporate activities. The Council recognised that modern slavery and human trafficking remained a hidden blight on society and that the Council had a responsibility to be vigilant in spotting associated risks and to strive to ensure that its supply chains were free from modern slavery and human trafficking at any level.

The Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement detailed the steps the Council had taken to understand potential modern slavery and human trafficking risks related to its business and the measures adopted with the aim of ensuring that these offences were not committed through the delivery of services or via supply chains. A copy of the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement was attached to the report.

RESOLVED that the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement be approved.

**CAB
20/23** **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Report in the Public Interest**

Consideration was given to a report on the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Report in the Public Interest.

On 30 May 2023 the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman wrote to the Chief Executive to confirm that after consideration of a complaint they had received, they have decided to issue their findings as a public interest report. The Ombudsman could issue a public interest report where they thought it was important to raise awareness of an investigation, because of its seriousness and significance and that by highlighting the learning from complaints, it could help to improve services for others. The facts of the case were detailed within the report.

The Ombudsman required that the Council discuss their findings and recommendations at a high decision-making level of elected members, which for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council was Cabinet.

The Council had accepted the Ombudsman's recommendations in full and the actions to improve processes and policies to ensure other young adults and their families were treated fairly and in line with statutory and good practice guidance would all be fully completed within the three-month timeline.

The Ombudsman completed the investigation into this complaint by issuing a report because it was considered to be in the public interest to do so, given the significant injustice caused to the complainant, and because it was considered to be a significant topical issue.

To comply with requirements surrounding a Report in the Public Interest, a notice was required to be put in two local newspapers advising of the existence of the report and how a copy could be obtained by any member of the public. A physical copy would be available through the Customer Service access point at the main library.

RESOLVED that the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Report in the Public Interest following Investigation Reference 22 010 732 be noted and all the recommendations contained within be fully implemented.

**CAB
21/23**

Xentrall Annual Report 2022/23

Consideration was given to a report on the Xentrall Annual Report 2022/23. The annual report allowed Cabinet to review the progress and performance of Xentrall Shared Services, the Stockton and Darlington partnership and demonstrated how Xentrall had delivered savings across the board whilst continuing to improve performance and customer satisfaction. Xentrall Shared Services, the Stockton and Darlington partnership, was established in May 2008 and was in its sixteenth 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.

Despite the internal and external challenges faced by the partnership, Xentrall continued to perform well and deliver developmental projects alongside its day-

to-day services to both Councils and external customers. The negative impact on supplies caused by the pandemic and war in Ukraine was subsiding, but the additional pressure of inflation continued to be a concern, particularly at renewal points in external contracts. Future activities of Xentrall were detailed within the report

As with previous years, the continual service improvement mentality within Xentrall would be applied to leverage any further service improvements and/or savings for both Councils. Xentrall would also continue to assess new partnering and business opportunities, should these arise. This aligned with its business plan of tactically growing the business, which in turn helps to support both Council's Medium-Term Financial Plans.

CAB **Minutes of Various Bodies**
22/23

In accordance with the Council's Constitution or previous practice the minutes of the meeting of the bodies indicated below were submitted to Cabinet for consideration:-

TSAB – 19 April 2023

RESOLVED that the minutes as detailed be received.