

CABINET

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Monday 18 September 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&D-F,T&P), Ged Morton, Geraldine Brown, Judy Trainer (D-CS), Eddie Huntington (D-ChS), Reuben Kench (D-CS,E&C), Carolyn Nice (D-A,H&W) and Marc Cole (D-R&IG).

Also in attendance: Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Marc Besford, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Ted Strike and Cllr Sylvia Walmsley

Apologies: , .

CAB/23/23 Evacuation Procedure

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

CAB/24/23 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

CAB/25/23 Minutes

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2023.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2023 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

CAB/26/23 Financial Update and Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 Quarter 1

Consideration was given to a report that summarised the Council's financial performance and position at the end of the first quarter of the 2023/24 financial year.

The financial position for the Council for the first quarter of the financial year (to 30th June 2023) highlighted a projected overall overspend of £3.7m. The biggest pressures continue to be pay award and Children's Services. More details were provided in the body of the report. The position would continue to be closely monitored and managed throughout the remainder of the financial year, however if the pressures materialised as expected, the Council would need to review earmarked reserves to identify where the shortfall can be funded from in order to avoid using general fund balances.

The report highlighted the significant financial challenges presented by the current inflationary environment in both the current year and into the medium term. Whilst the Council was awaiting details of the financial settlement for next year it was inevitable that there would be significant challenges in the future. These challenges were not

unique to Stockton and were being faced by many Councils across the Country, many of which were in a more difficult financial position. Whilst the Council was able to re-direct earmarked reserves to resolve immediate pressures this was not sustainable over the medium to long term and the position needed to be addressed.

Members were aware of the commitment to commence a transformation programme and this was underway with Children's Services a key area of focus. Work was underway to look at areas where savings could be materialised sooner as well as areas where spend can be reduced, through the transformation work.

The report also presented an update on the Capital Programme.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The update to the Medium Term Financial Plan and the current level of General Fund balances be noted.
2. The revised Capital Programme at Appendix A be noted.

CAB/27/23 SBC Overview and Scrutiny - End-of-Term Report 2019-2023

Consideration was given to the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) Overview and Scrutiny – End-of-Term Report that had been produced for the recently concluded four-year Council term (covering the period 2019-2023).

The latest statutory overview and scrutiny guidance highlighted the need to maintain a strong organisational culture, including regular engagement between the executive and scrutiny, and communication of scrutiny's role and purpose to the wider Local Authority.

The report highlighted the work of the Council's scrutiny function during the last four years and contained infographics which summarised each year's work programme in detail (these infographics acted as each year's Annual Report). Importantly, it also included examples of how the outcomes from Select Committee reviews had impacted upon future service provision.

The End-of-Term Report was considered by each Select Committee prior to the recent Local Government Elections, as well as the Council's Executive Scrutiny Committee.

It was noted that review recommendations were made at a certain point in time, and naturally as the report covered a four-year period, a number of the issues covered had since developed further.

Aside from those relating to recently completed reviews, the majority of scrutiny recommendations from this period had been subject to monitoring by Select Committees and had been signed-off as complete.

Production of the End-of-Term Report and consideration by Cabinet and Council (20 September 2023) supported the aims of the statutory guidance. Consideration of the report by Council also fulfilled the requirements of the SBC Constitution.

As previously noted, all five of the Council's Select Committees and the Executive Scrutiny Committee had considered the Overview and Scrutiny – End-of-Term Report

2019-2023 during March 2023. The report was also circulated to all SBC staff for information via the Keeping You in Touch (KYiT) weekly newsletter on 5 May 2023.

In addition, the report had been shared with the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) as an example of local overview and scrutiny activity. CfGS has recently contacted the Scrutiny Team with a view to using this as a case study for other Local Authorities.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

CAB/28/23 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman complaints

Consideration was given to a report on the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Complaints 2022/23 (LGSCO).

The report provided the details of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's annual review letter for the Council for 2022/23. There were 34 enquiries submitted to the Ombudsman during the year, of these 10 met the threshold for a detailed investigation by the Ombudsman. Of the 10 complaint investigations, 7 were upheld. All recommendations made by the Ombudsman, following their investigations, had been implemented. There was one formal public interest report that has been published, however this relates to a decision made in 2023/24.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The report be noted which sets out that no LGSCO formal public interest reports has been received in 22/23, however there has been one formal public interest report that has been published. This relates to a decision made in 2023/24.
2. It be note that effective procedures remain in place to ensure that all learning from Ombudsman recommendations and findings take place.

CAB/29/23 Appointment to Outside Body - Teesside International Airport Board limited

Consideration was given to a report on an Appointment to Outside Body - Teesside International Airport Board limited.

RESOLVED that Councillor Norma Stephenson be appointed to the Teesside International Airport Board.

CAB/30/23 LA Governor Appointments

Consideration was given to a report on 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 nominations to school / academy Governing Bodies listed in the appendix to the report.

RESOLVED that the below appointments be made to the vacant Governorships in line with agreed procedures subject to a Personal Disclosure and DBS clearance:-
Harewood Primary School - Mark Jones (School Nomination)
Whitehouse Primary School - Fleur Carney (School nomination)

Billingham South Primary School - Cllr B Cook (School Nomination)
Term of office to run continuously.

CAB/31/23 Minutes of Various Bodies

In accordance with the Council's Constitution or previous practice the minutes of the meeting of the bodies indicated below are submitted to members for consideration:-
TVCA Cabinet – 30 June 2023

RESOLVED that the minutes be received.

CAB/32/23 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2023

Consideration was given to a report on Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2023.

This report outlined how the Local Authority (LA) was meeting its duty to secure sufficient childcare and included information about the supply of and demand for childcare, details on any gaps in provision and an action plan on how they would be addressed.

The Childcare Act 2006 and 2016 and the associated statutory guidance for local authorities on Early Education and Childcare – June 2018, required Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (the Local Authority) to secure sufficient childcare, as far as was reasonably practicable and within available resources, for working parents, or parents who were studying or training for employment, for children aged 0 – 14 (or up to 18 for disabled children). Local authorities were also required to report annually to elected council members on how they were meeting this duty.

The sufficiency assessment would be placed on the Stockton Information Directory once it had been through the Cabinet process, so it was available for parents / carers, childcare providers, and employers to read.

A project plan would be produced to implement the new funded childcare offer.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.