

CABINET

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday 15 February 2024.

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: Peter Bell, Julie Butcher, Tara Connor, Rachel Harrison, Eddie Huntington, Reuben Kench, Neil Mitchell, Ged Morton, Jonathan Nertney and Carolyn Nice.

Also in attendance: Cllr Richard Eglington, Cllr Niall Innes and Cllr Tony Riordan

Apologies:

CAB/70/23 Evacuation Procedure

The Evacuation Procedure was noted.

CAB/71/23 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

CAB/72/23 Minutes

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2024.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2024 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

CAB/73/23 Scrutiny Review of Domestic Waste Collections, Kerbside Recycling and Green Waste

Consideration was given to a report that presented the outcomes of the Place Select Committee's review of Domestic Waste Collections, Kerbside Recycling and Green Waste.

The report outlined the outcomes of the Scrutiny Review of Domestic Waste Collections, Kerbside Recycling and Green Waste. In conducting the review, the Select Committee were aware that:

- Levels of recycling in the Borough are amongst the lowest in the country
- The cost of the weekly collection of general waste is increasing rapidly
- Food waste collection is likely to be a requirement in the coming years and a proactive approach could contribute to the Council's carbon reduction targets
- The collection of garden waste/green waste also benefited some communities more than others

Overall, the Council's approach to waste reduction could be improved to reduce the financial and carbon cost. Therefore, this review aimed to consider the potential public reaction but also give appropriate consideration to the importance of the environment, the costs of service delivery, and the direction of national policy over food waste.

The Committee had taken evidence from Council Officers and a representative from the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP). The Committee also visited the J&B Recycling plant, Hartlepool as part of this review.

Following approval by Cabinet, an action plan would be submitted to the Select Committee for their endorsement.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The Council adopt a fortnightly refuse collection service.
2. Scenario 3 (fortnightly refuse collection with a weekly 'multi-stream collection of dry recycling and food waste) in the Place Select Committee report is adopted as the Council's new waste and recycling collection service. Consideration is also given to timescales around national mandated services and local waste disposal arrangements.
3. The green waste collection service be reviewed in line with updated government guidance.
4. A comprehensive communications and community engagement plan on proposed changes be implemented to ensure residents are sufficiently informed prior to the enactment of any changes, and to help embed the changes, to the waste and recycling service.

CAB/74/23 Reference from the Council - Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth

Consideration was given to a report that addressed the motion submitted by Councillor Niall Innes at the Council meeting on 22 November 2023, concerning the proposed introduction of a new 'Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth' role. In line with Council Procedure Rule 3.42, the motion had been automatically referred to the Cabinet for further consideration.

Councillor Innes's motion challenged the introduction of the 'Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth' position, citing a lack of full Council consultation and questioning the allocation of resources.

The motion proposed reallocating the intended salary for this role towards employing civic enforcement officers/street wardens and establishing a 'Community Safety Hub' in Ingleby Barwick.

The motion submitted to the Council Reads:

"The Cabinet and Senior Leadership of this Council have recently sought to introduce a new 'Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth' without consulting the full Council.

Despite the exercise undertaken last year in which this council provided 'Golden Goodbyes' and reduced Director positions while increasing salaries, it has now been decided that a further Management position is required at an estimated cost of over £120,000 per year to the Taxpayers of Stockton.

Rather than continue to spend residents' money on yet another Director, this motion urges the Cabinet to think again and to ensure that the money is used for public good and suggest that it be used to employ more enforcement officers/street wardens and create a 'Community Safety Hub' in Ingleby Barwick.

The salary set aside for this single director could be used to recruit as many as three civic enforcement officers / street wardens and space could be set aside in property already owned by this authority to host a community security hub, providing a base from which enforcement officers and the police could operate.

This motion seeks to ensure that resident's money is being used on initiatives that deliver for them, and keep our communities safe, not create more bureaucracy and more waste!"

Cabinet had made a decision to provide funding for a new chief officer post, the 'Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth'. This decision was executive in nature and had been made within the Cabinet's remit.

The appointment of a chief officer, was a non-executive decision, it fell under the Council's jurisdiction and had been delegated to an appointments panel. The implementation of the Cabinet's funding decision necessitates a non-executive action by the Council.

The motion submitted to the Council raised concerns about the new post, urging the Cabinet to reconsider its funding decision. This motion was advisory, the full Council did not have the authority to require the Cabinet to reconsider its decision.

The Cabinet maintained the discretion to either note the motion or reconsider or uphold its decision. While the motion from the Council may be considered, it did not compel the Cabinet to alter its decision.

The rationale for the original decision to introduce the new role was detailed in the Cabinet report titled "Powering our Future - Senior Management Capacity Review" (CAB/16/23).

The arguments for revisiting the decision were set out in the motion.

Councillor Niall Innes was in attendance at the meeting and was given the opportunity to make representation.

Cabinet noted the motion and considered representations. Cabinet agreed that it would not revisit the initial decision.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The motion be noted.

2. The initial decision made by Cabinet will not be revisited.

CAB/75/23 Environmental Sustainability & Carbon Reduction Strategy (ES&CRS) 2022-32 Monitoring Report

Consideration was given to a report on the Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy (ES&CRS).

Climate change poses a real threat to society and biodiversity. There were already increasing impacts of flooding, high winds, heat waves and species collapse. Efforts to limit climate change by reducing carbon emissions needed to be widespread, urgent and sustained.

The Councils Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy (ES&CRS), adopted in 2023, set out the direction the Council needed to take and described the actions that would contribute to the achievement of net zero. The report outlined progress since the adoption of the strategy, including reductions in energy consumption and efforts to support biodiversity.

The Council had made significant progress within the resources available, achieving a steady decline in carbon emissions over a longer period. However, substantial additional investment in the coming years, beyond that which was identified, would be required if the Council was to achieve the stated ambition of being a Net Zero authority by 2032

Continued concentration on measures to improve our energy efficiency and reduce emissions from our assets and fleet, are an urgent priority, alongside counterbalancing natural solutions such as tree planting and solar energy generation.

HM Government had entered binding international arrangements for greenhouse gas emissions reduction and set out comprehensive requirements within the Environment Act. The secondary legislation that would define targets for relevant local and regional agencies, had been delayed in a number of key areas. However, the Council would need, at some point, to show substantial further progress on CO₂, waste, water and air quality, and biodiversity, beyond that which is achievable within current budgets.

The Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) Net Zero Strategy incorporated priorities for homes & communities, public organisations, and nature & resources, alongside decarbonisation of industry and transport. The TV Strategy was designed to complement the strategies of the partner Authorities and the Council goals were broadly aligned. The TVCA strategy highlighted opportunities for economic growth associated with clean energy and 'green' technologies, however it also acknowledged the importance of maximising the impact of national funding and Government Policies.

Cabinet were asked to consider making representations to the Government for more resources toward the major investment required to deliver our environmental sustainability objectives.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The positive progress on the Environmental Sustainability targets, as set out in this report and the appendices be noted.

2. Cabinet seek to influence Government to provide substantial additional resources to enable further decarbonisation, environmental protection and community resilience.

3. The identification of additional resources, within future Medium Term Financial Plans, to support the next phase of carbon reduction and environmental sustainability measures be supported.

CAB/76/23 Annual Report of the Independent Safety Advisory Group (ISAG)

Consideration was given to a report on the Annual Report of the Independent Safety Advisory Group (ISAG).

The ISAG brought together a range of professionals to scrutinise and advise upon event safety processes and systems for outdoor events. The ISAG looks at plans for a wide range of events and festivals in Stockton-on-Tees, focusing on events of a significant scale or complexity. All events of scale on Stockton Council land were subject to review by the ISAG, and where requested ISAG would review event safety plans which were hosted on private land.

The ISAG did not take decisions on whether or not an event should go ahead but provided specialist advice and recommendations to landowners, including the Council to enable them to make informed decisions to allow an event or require changes to an event plan. The ISAG provided practical advice and guidance to event organisers and aims to drive up the quality of event plans/safety planning.

The ISAG's independent Chair produced an annual report for information, to highlight significant findings and make recommendations for areas of further work.

CAB/77/23 School Performance 2022 – 2023 For Vulnerable Pupils

Consideration was given to a report on School Performance for Vulnerable Pupils 2022-2023.

The report presented a summary analysis of vulnerable pupil performance in the academic year 2022 – 2023 for all key stages and all providers in the Borough. It was informed by the latest available data, some of which remained unvalidated and compared to national averages where they exist. It included performance outcomes for:

1. Pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium Funding;
2. Performance by gender;
3. Black and Minority Ethnic children;
4. Children and Young People in Our Care ;
5. Children with Special Needs;
6. Attendance and exclusion figures for Stockton.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The standards and achievement across the Borough for vulnerable groups of children be noted.

2. The strong overall performance of Stockton schools at both primary and secondary phases be noted.

3. Work be undertaken to further reduce educational attainment gap.

CAB/78/23 Procedure for Admission of Pupils to Primary and Secondary Schools in September 2025

Consideration was given to a report that outlined the admission arrangements the Local Authority (LA) was proposing, for entry into both primary (Reception) and secondary (Year 7) schools in September 2025. To comply with legislation for admission in September 2025, the report included the co-ordinated timetable, the Published Admission Number (PAN) for all Primary and Secondary Schools for that year and the LA's proposed Admission Policy (Oversubscription Policy) for Community maintained and Voluntary Controlled (VC) schools for entry in September 2025.

An attached to the report provided further detail of the proposed Co-ordinated Admission arrangements timetable – 2025/26.

An attachment to the report provided the proposed PANs for September 2025 in Community, VA, Academies and Free Schools and highlighted those schools to be considered for expansion and remodelling.

An attachment to the report provided further detail on the proposed LA's Admission Policy for September 2025 for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools only, that would give priority to applications for admission to a school if that school is oversubscribed.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The proposed Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for Primary, Secondary, Voluntary Aided (VA) schools, Academies and Free School (points 5-6 and Appendix 1 of the report) be approved.
2. The proposed PANs for Primary and Secondary schools for September 2025 (points 7-10 and Appendix 2 of the report) be approved.
3. The proposed Admission Policy for September 2025 (point 11-14 and Appendix 3 of the report) be approved.

CAB/79/23 Stockton-on-Tees SACRE Constitution

Consideration was given to a report that detailed changes to the constitution of the Stockton-on-Tees SACRE.

The current constitution did not reflect the local community and the proposed removals had historically remained vacant. The introduction of 'Other World Views' allows for all religions (other than those named within Group A) and for the ever-changing local landscape.

SACRE approved the proposed changes at their meeting held on Thursday 16 November 2023.

RESOLVED that:-

To change the SACRE constitution as below:

1. To introduce the category of 'Other World Views' under Group A (2 positions).
2. To remove 'Society of Friends' and Islamic Society' from Group A.