

## **CABINET**

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

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

**Officers:** Geraldine Brown, Mike Greene, Reuben Kench, Ged Morton, Carolyn Nice, Eddie Huntington, Iain Robinson, Marc Stephenson, Peter Bell, Julie Butcher and Michelle Gunn.

**Also in attendance:** Cllr Marc Besford and Cllr Marilyn Surtees

**Apologies:** , .

### **CAB/1/24 Evacuation Procedure**

The evacuation procedure was noted.

### **CAB/2/24 Declarations of Interest**

There were no interests declared.

### **CAB/3/24 Minutes**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting which was held on 14 March 2024

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved and signed as a correct record by the Chair.

### **CAB/4/24 Minutes of Various Bodies**

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

TVCA Cabinet – 15 December 2023  
TSAB – 11 October 2023  
SSP – 20 September 2023

RESOLVED that the above minutes be received.

### **CAB/5/24 Scrutiny Review of Cost of Living Response - Final Report of the People Select Committee**

Consideration was given to a report that presented the outcomes of the People Select Committee's review of Cost of Living Response.

The report outlined the outcomes of the Scrutiny Review of Cost of Living Response. The review had considered the key components of the cost of living approach adopted by the Council at a time of increasing service demands, for both advice and support. Consequently, it had explored the possibility to develop change, and, if appropriate, grow the Council's services around the cost of living work to support more residents in the Borough.

The Committee had taken evidence from Council Officers, Bright Minds Big Futures, and following partners/organisations:

- Thrive Teesside, Catalyst
- Stockton-on-Tees Food Power Network
- Unite the Union
- Local Government Association
- Tees Credit Union
- Stockton & District Advice & Information Service.

In addition, the Committee visited two The Bread and Butter Thing Hubs during the course of the review.

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

The report was approved by the Committee and summarised evidence presented to the Committee over the preceding months. Progress had continued and many of initiatives referred to were now operational, as outlined below:

The Bread & Butter Thing (TBBT)

TBBT was now live at five venues across the Borough allowing residents to enjoy high-quality food shopping at lower costs to help boost financial resilience.

A maximum of 80 households could register for each venue and, currently, you can register to shop at:

- Teesside Vineyard Church, Thornaby (Mondays)
- Salvation Army, Stockton (Tuesdays)
- New Life Family Centre, Billingham (Wednesdays)
- Redhill Family Hub, Roseworth (Thursdays)
- Newtown Community Resource Centre, Stockton (Fridays)

Following the success of previous Here to Help events held across the Borough, planning was underway for a large-scale event to be held on Saturday 20 July 2024 in Stockton Town Centre. The focus of this event would be families and young people. As well as providing advice and support this event would offer a range of activities for residents to enjoy.

Individual schools had established their own schemes to assist parents or carers with the cost of school uniform, including the availability of pre-loved uniforms. Assistance with school uniform costs vary across schools so it was advisable to check a school's website for specific information on uniform cost support. Several clothing banks across the Borough also stock pre-loved uniform and social media groups had been created for the purpose of offering pre-loved school uniforms. An updated mapping exercise of

pre-loved uniform provision and support with school uniform costs across the Borough would be conducted as part of the action plan for this review.

RESOLVED that:-

1. Findings from this review will inform the development of the Council's Anti-Poverty Action Plan/Strategy as part of the 'Powering Our Futures' programme. This will be coordinated with partners and will advocate the importance of lived experience.
2. The Council continues to work with schools and governors to address the issues around the affordability of school uniform and provide options to expand the provision of pre-loved uniforms are explored, through devising an action plan clearly outlining the steps to be taken to address these issues. The action plan will be shared with the Committee and progress reported as part of the wider recommendations. In addition, the Council will meet with Multi-Academy Trust school improvement leads to advocate the need for affordable school uniforms and the ongoing promotion of pre-loved ones.
3. The income maximisation service is widely promoted through Stockton News and social media channels as a means of assisting residents with debt management and financial difficulties.
4. Building on the success of previous staff drop in sessions around Cost of Living this targeted approach continues where there is a need.
5. Building on the existing success of the work undertaken, to continue to build on best practice from across the country working alongside the LGA.

#### **CAB/6/24 Powering Our Future - Programme Update**

Consideration was given to a report that provided an update on the Powering Our Future Programme. It included:

- Communities Powering Our Future – confirmation of priority workstreams and 'Getting Ready' exercise
- Partnerships Powering Our Future - draft Partnerships Charter for Cabinet approval
- Transformation Powering Our Future:
  - Draft scope for 14 Transformation Reviews.
  - Update on Xentrall Shared Services and Digital, Data & Technology (DDAT) projects.
- Colleagues Powering Our Future - draft Workforce Strategy for Cabinet approval.
- Regeneration Powering Our Future – update on Our Six Towns and the Tees Valley Care & Health Innovation Zone.

The framework for Powering Our Future was agreed by Cabinet in July 2023. Since then, work had taken place to develop and refine the focus of the Programme to ensure that it effectively responds to the challenges and opportunities facing the Council and the Borough.

In January 2024, Cabinet agreed the following Mission Statement for the Council:

'We will be a bold, brave and innovative Council. Together with our partners we will make sure Stockton-on-Tees is a fair and equal place, where everyone is proud to live

and work, where our communities flourish and people feel they belong. We want everyone in our Borough to participate in building a brighter future for all of us.'

Cabinet also agreed the areas of focus for 5 underpinning Missions:

- Communities Powering Our Future.
- Partnerships Powering Our Future.
- Transformation Powering Our Future.
- Colleagues Powering Our Future.
- Regeneration Powering Our Future.

Powering Our Future set out a planned approach to carefully manage resources over the longer term. It would see the Council create a new relationship with communities, while providing efficient services that offer value for money and were valued by residents.

The Council approach would be iterative, building over time, to engage communities and undertake thorough reviews. This can avoid the need to make short-term cuts, which could be damaging to services and the residents the Council served.

The remainder of the report provided an update on each of the Missions, for Cabinet comment and approval. Regular reports to Cabinet would ensure that the Member-led approach drives the development and delivery of Powering Our Future.

The Missions were as follows:-

#### Communities Powering Our Future

This Mission sought to change the Council's relationship with communities to make sure residents have happy, healthy lives. Three workstreams had been identified for this Mission, these were:

- Communications.
- Community Engagement.
- Community Development.

#### Partnerships Powering Our Future

This Mission sought to ensure we are 'Stronger together'. A Charter had been drafted, setting out proposed terms of engagement for the Council to observe when entering into any Partnership. This sought to ensure that the Council engaged in strong partnerships that delivered better outcomes for communities, efficiently and with available resources.

The draft Partnership Charter was attached to the report. Subject to Cabinet agreement, this would be embedded into working practices.

#### Transformation Powering Our Future

This Mission would identify new and innovative ways of working that were better for communities and more efficient. Proposals for the detailed scope of 14 Transformation Reviews that form Phase 1 of the Programme were attached at to the report for Cabinet approval. The purpose of the scope was to identify areas of review or improvement within a given project. The scopes aimed to provide clarity on the objectives of the project, in alignment with the Council's Mission Statement.

#### Colleagues Powering Our Future

This Mission sought to empower colleagues to do the best they can for communities. A copy of the draft Workforce Strategy was attached to the report for Cabinet approval.

#### Regeneration Powering Our Future

This Mission would drive economic growth to improve community prosperity and wellbeing.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The updates on individual Missions be noted.
2. The Partnership Charter attached at Appendix 1 of the report be agreed.
3. Updates on the Xentrall Shared Services and DDAT projects in the Transformation Powering Our Future section be noted.
4. The scope for the 14 Transformation Reviews attached at Appendix 2 of the report be agreed.
5. The draft Workforce Strategy set attached at Appendix 3 of the report be agreed.

#### 3. Reasons for the Decision

2. Cabinet is recommended to agree updates on the Powering Our Future approach to ensure that the Council has a clear plan to address the financial challenges we face, at the same time as improving outcomes for communities, including:

- Creation of opportunities to build brighter futures for our communities and reduce inequality, using the limited amount of money we have available.
- Carefully managing our resources, creating a new relationship with communities, while providing efficient services that are valued by our residents.

#### 4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

#### 5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

#### 6. Details of any Dispensations

None

#### 7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Midnight Friday 26 April 2024

Proper Officer

