

CABINET

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Monday 17 June 2024.

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

Officers: Michelle Gunn, Judy Trainer, Gary Woods, Sarah Bowman-Abouna, Julie Butcher, Garry Cummings, Mike Greene, Reuben Kench, Majella McCarthy, Ged Morton, Iain Robinson and Marc Stephenson.

Also in attendance: Cllr Marc Besford, Cllr Richard Eglington, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr David Reynard, Cllr Marcus Vickers and Cllr Sylvia Walmsley

Apologies: Cllr Lisa Evans (Cabinet Member).

CAB/15/24 Evacuation Procedure

The Evacuation Procedure was noted.

CAB/16/24 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

CAB/17/24 Minutes

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 16 May 2024.

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

CAB/18/24 Scrutiny Review of (Unauthorised) Roadside Advertising - Final Report of the Place Select Committee

Consideration was given to a report of the Place Select Committee's review of (Unauthorised) Roadside Advertising

It was explained that following concerns regarding advertising being placed by the roadside, the review examined whether this is still causing a problem in the borough and how issues with roadside advertising were dealt with. The Committee was satisfied that the majority of roadside advertising followed the guidelines and that a coordinated approach was taken when issues were raised.

During the review, the Committee found that the Anti-Social Behaviour and Policing Act had given community safety the powers to deal with specific issues relating to unauthorised roadside advertising. There was now a coordinated approach between Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council teams when dealing with complaints, with all complaints being initially assessed and recorded by community safety and, where possible, resolved either through education and advice, warnings or enforcement

action. Complaints relating to planning consideration are passed to planning service if all methods of resolving without enforcement action are exhausted. While Planning services followed the government guidance, they exercised a pragmatic approach when considering issues regarding deemed and express consent to ensure the limited resources were used appropriately.

There were no reported trends in accidents caused by signage and only 0.7% of all requests for community safety services from the public, since January 2022, were related to the issue. The majority of these were complaints for flyposting in commercial areas such as Portrack Lane, Stockton Town centre and Bon Lea Industrial Estate and these areas were monitored.

The Committee was therefore satisfied that unauthorised roadside advertising was no longer a major concern for the Borough and mechanisms were in place to deal with any issues efficiently and effectively. The review's recommendations sought to ensure that the public was fully informed of the rules regarding roadside advertising and reporting systems were strengthened. The Committee felt that online reporting could be enhanced through the introduction of mapping layers, similar to the approach currently being used for reporting of flyposting and that the online reporting system should be reviewed to ensure that all relevant information was obtained to enable issues to be directed to the appropriate service for action.

RESOLVED that:-

1. further information and guidance regarding the planning regulations for roadside advertising be placed on the planning area of the website.
2. the online reporting system is reviewed to make it easier for members of the public to report an issue.

CAB/19/24 Scrutiny Review of Access to GPs and Primary Medical Care - Final Report of the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee

Consideration was given to a report of the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee's review of Access to GPs and Primary Medical Care.

It was explained that accessing the help and advice of General Practitioners (GPs) and other professionals, working in primary care general medical practices, within the UK, had long elicited a range of experiences and, indeed, opinions. Exacerbated by the recent COVID-19 pandemic and its subsequent knock-on effect to all health and care providers, the ability to make contact with and then use such services in the context of changed systems, working practices and workforce capacity had further sharpened views on this topic.

Conscious of the ongoing debate around these existing challenges, the Government released a new plan, in May 2023, to make it easier for patients to see their GP and, in collaboration with the NHS, had announced a major new primary care access recovery plan which aimed to facilitate faster, more convenient care. Regionally, the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB) publicised a three-year programme bringing together the NHS and Councils with voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations to tackle long-standing inequalities and

poor health, an investment which included extra support for the 'Deep End' network of GP practices in the region's most deprived communities, and steps to attract and retain more GPs to work in deprived areas, with extra training and support to encourage trainee doctors to build their careers in these practices.

Locally, this scrutiny topic had been proposed, back in February 2022 (though was unable to be undertaken during the 2022-2023 municipal year due to competing work programme demands). At that point, several related concerns were highlighted around processes involved in accessing general practice, including call wait times, the need to complete online questionnaires, and the initial requirement to tell call-handlers of very personal issues before receiving an appointment. Whilst it was acknowledged that work would have taken place in relation to this topic since early-2022, national and regional announcements regarding primary care (general practice) access demonstrated the ongoing high-profile nature of what was a key frontline health service.

The aim of the review was to:

- Understand the existing local 'access to GPs' landscape in the context of national / regional developments around this ongoing issue.
- Ascertain systems for accessing general practice services, the communication of these to the public, and how effective they were (including any variations across the Borough's providers).
- Determine any areas which may assist in improving the experience of the local population, and practices themselves, when individuals wished to contact and / or access general practice services.
- Share any identified good practice within the Borough's Primary Care Networks (PCNs).

Cabinet noted that the Committee had taken evidence from several relevant health bodies including the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB), Cleveland Local Medical Committee (LMC), Hartlepool & Stockton Health (H&SH) GP Federation, and the Borough's four Primary Care Networks (PCNs). To ascertain experiences of contacting / accessing local practices, public / patient views were sought and considered from a variety of sources including the Care Quality Commission (CQC), NENC ICB, Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees, and Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) from the Borough's general practices. GP patient survey data was also reflected upon.

Cabinet also requested that the report be shared with Tees Valley Integrated Care Partnership.

RESOLVED that:-

General

1) All relevant health bodies (NENC ICB, Cleveland LMC, H&SH, NHS Trusts, and general practices) engage regularly and constructively around the issues raised as part of this review to ensure that patients were approached/ received care from the most appropriate services, based on need.

Communications

2) All relevant health bodies continue efforts to increase public / patient understanding about accessing the most appropriate services (including in the context of the Pharmacy First initiative), using all available communication mechanisms (both print and digital) and links through local community networks (e.g. community partnerships), to ensure key messages were reinforced.

3) Councillors and local MPs be supported in helping with these communication messages as leaders in their communities (as well as their role in raising concerns expressed by the community), and encourage positive feedback as well as concerns (to help share and spread learning and best practice).

4) The value and importance of all general practice roles be highlighted and publicised by health bodies and practices themselves.

5) Local practices be recognised for continuing to deliver primary medical care services safely in Stockton-on-Tees despite the ongoing challenges raised during this review.

Operational

6) All general practices move towards providing the full use of digital telephony capabilities (including call-back functionality), with appropriate staff in place to support these arrangements.

7) All general practices be encouraged to review and refresh care navigation processes, ensuring adequate training was in place to support implementation to ensure both staff and patients were comfortable with the approach.

8) To ensure appropriate workforce capacity was in place to maximise the local general practice offer:

a) NENC ICB continue to support / encourage uptake of the ARRS scheme, particularly amongst those PCNs which had not accessed this initiative.

b) All relevant health bodies continue to explore further and develop options to increase GP recruitment and retention in the Borough.

c) Options to increase nursing numbers (including strengthening training offers and uptake) be explored further.

9) The Borough's four PCNs be encouraged and supported to work together collaboratively to share and adopt good practice.

Public / patient feedback

10) Relevant health stakeholders be proactive in encouraging involvement of patients in practice Patient Participation Groups (PPGs), aim to ensure these are representative of a practice's patient list demographic, and consider fostering links between the Borough's PPGs to assist in identifying / addressing any access issues.

11) NENC ICB consider its complaint / compliment reporting mechanisms so future data could be provided at a local general practice level.

Dissemination of report

12) The report is shared with the Tees Valley Integrated Care Partnership.

CAB/20/24 Minutes of Various Bodies

Consideration was given to the following sets of minutes:-

TSAB – 13 March 2024

SSP – 28 March 2024

RESOLVED that the minutes be noted.

CAB/21/24 Council Plan Update

Consideration was given to a report that focused on the progress of the implementation of the Council Plan 2023/26 for the year 2023/24.

An update on each of the Council Plan priorities was provided to Members. It was noted that there had been significant progress in all areas of this year's priorities.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

CAB/22/24 Exclusion of the Public

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

CAB/23/24 Thornaby Town Deal Update

Consideration was given to a report that provided an update on progress made in the development and delivery of priority interventions that would be delivered across Thornaby, under the Town Deal programme.

Members were reminded that Thornaby had been identified as one of 101 towns to be included as part of the Government's Town Deal Programme and in March 2021 was allocated £23.9m of investment funding to support transformational change across the town.

In Thornaby Town Centre, work, to date, had focused on the opportunities to address the impact of long-term vacant properties, namely Phoenix House and the Golden Eagle. In January 2022 the Council took control of Phoenix House, which was subsequently demolished in 2023, providing a cleared site for redevelopment.

Cabinet noted that the Council owned the freehold of Thornaby Town Centre, including the Golden Eagle building. The Council's freehold interest was subject to a 150-year lease to LCP Proudreed, with 134 years unexpired, essentially making them owners of the town centre by virtue of the length of their lease. East Eye Limited held a 99-year lease, with a 42 years unexpired term on the Golden Eagle building, directly from LCP Proudreed.

Progress has been made regarding seeking to secure control of the Golden Eagle, namely by agreeing in-principle and subject to Cabinet approval, the surrender of the two leasehold interests in the building.

Once the leasehold interests have been acquired, the Council would be able to proceed with the demolition of the building, which had been identified as a priority since the Let's Talk About Our Towns consultation in 2020 and subsequent business case documentation linked to Town Deal approval.

An independent valuation had been undertaken alongside an assessment of the likely cost of pursuing a Compulsory Purchase Order to secure the site. This advice had provided a basis for negotiations on acquisitions of the two leasehold interests.

The Council, with support from specialist property advisors, had reached agreement to acquire the leasehold interests. Detail of the considerations within the negotiation and agreed values for acquisition of leasehold interests were provided in an exempt Appendix A, to the report.

As part of the negotiations to unlock the Golden Eagle site, the current long leaseholder, requested that a condition of the surrender of their lease was the sale of the Council's freehold interest in Thornaby Town Centre. This proposal had formed part of the agreement in place with the long leaseholder LCP Proudreed and the full terms of the disposal and conditions were detailed in the exempt Appendix A.

Cabinet had previously approved the principal of the construction of a new swimming pool on the former Phoenix House site. It was explained that following discussion with Tees Active Leisure and Thornaby Town Deal Board, there had been a desire, from an operational and local level, to see enhanced gym provision included within the scope of work.

This opportunity has been explored and it was proposed that the scheme include the creation of a 25m 5-lane swimming pool at ground floor and c400sqm gym at first floor along with a modern changing village and dry changing facilities to benefit all facility users. The programme for the closure and demolition of Thornaby pool would be carefully phased to ensure there was continuity of pool provision.

The change in scope to incorporate enhanced gym provision alongside rising construction prices, material and inflationary pressures has resulted in higher than anticipated costs for the project. Cabinet was therefore requested to approve the draw down of £4,500,000 from the previously allocated £5m in the MTFP February 2021 to supplement investment in the town centre scheme and enable delivery within the agreed project scope.

To further mitigate against current cost pressures Cabinet was asked to approve the reallocation of £1.5m Town Deal funding from the cycleways intervention to supplement the town centre regeneration schemes.

Cabinet received updates relating to:-

The New Skills Facility
North Thornaby
Connecting Thornaby

Members were provided with a table detailing all the necessary revised funding allocations for each intervention.

RESOLVED that

1. the progress made, on the development and delivery of the priority interventions, across the Town Deal Programme and endorsed by Thornaby Town Deal Board, be noted.
2. authority be delegated to the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth, Director of Corporate Services, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance, Transformation & Performance, in consultation with Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing, to negotiate, agree the terms of and enter, all necessary agreements, transactions and contracts to secure the acquisition, demolition and redevelopment of the Golden Eagle.
3. the use of £4,500,000 from the previously approved £5million allocation, be approved, to supplement investment in the proposed leisure facility and redevelopment works to Thornaby Pavilion.
4. the revised reallocation of Town Deal and co-funding resources, to enable delivery of the priority interventions, as outlined at Table 1, be approved.
5. the recommendations contained in the exempt Appendix A to the report be approved.

CAB/24/24 Billingham Town Centre and Sports Hub Update

Consideration was given to a report that provided an update on the development of a masterplan for Billingham town centre and sought approval for the partial acquisition of Billingham town centre and associated next steps, to enable redevelopment in line with the emerging masterplan and successful Levelling Up Fund bid.

The report also provided an update on the emerging proposals for Billingham Sports Hub, as part of the Council's commitment to improving leisure facilities and encouraging participation in sport and active leisure.

Since the acquisition of the town centre the Council had been in discussion with Evolve Properties to explore opportunities for how the masterplan can be delivered and what role the Council and Levelling Up Funding could play in enabling redevelopment.

The Council had agreed to acquire West Precinct and part of the adjacent Queensway South block at the point of vacant possession. Full details of the acquisition and valuation rationale were provided to members in exempt Appendix A. The first phase of redevelopment would therefore focus on working alongside Evolve to relocate tenants from the properties to be acquired, into other units, within the town centre. LUF would be used to cover the cost of this process.

The tenant relocation strategy would be led by Evolve, as landlord, and would require negotiation and agreement dependent on the specific lease arrangements and conditions.

Detailed negotiations on tenant relocation would commence following Cabinet approval to proceed.

Following the relocation of businesses and at the point of vacant possession, a phased programme of demolition would be undertaken. This process would facilitate the creation of a more sustainable level of retail floorspace across the town centre whilst retaining key anchor tenants, adding vibrancy, increasing footfall and providing opportunities for new uses, investment and job creation in the town centre.

The cleared West Precinct, Queensway South and former Library site would create an area that had the potential to accommodate a new residential community of circa 160 units in the heart of the town centre alongside new retail space and improvements to accessible infrastructure, public realm and car parking.

The total cost of relocation, demolition and fees was estimated at £13m in addition to expenditure on acquisition, as set out in exempt Appendix A.

Options for securing a development partner would be explored to facilitate the future redevelopment of the West Precinct site. Depending on the nature of any future development agreement, it was likely that some funding would be required to support the redevelopment of the site.

Cabinet was asked to agree to the principles of redevelopment as described above and in paragraphs 13-20 of the report and delegate authority to the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth in consultation with Director of Finance, Transformation and Performance, Director of Corporate Services authority to negotiate and complete the necessary legal documentation and all other contracts and agreements to support the proposals.

As part of the Council's commitment to improving leisure facilities and encouraging participation in sport and active leisure, the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (PPOSS) was adopted in January 2023. Both the PPOSS and the Stockton-on-Tees Local Football Facilities Plan (LFFP) support the delivery of a Sports Hub on the former Billingham Campus site.

The Sports Hub proposal was being progressed via the Football Foundations Hubs Programme which was designed to create financially sustainable grassroots sports facilities with multiple artificial grass pitches. Through the initial stages of the Hubs Programme process it was identified that the project has potential to deliver strong outcomes and following completion of the ongoing public consultation work was progressing towards the submission of a planning application in July 2024.

Cabinet was asked to consider approving delegated authority to extend the current contract beyond RIBA Stage 3 at a total estimated contract value of £800,000 utilising already secured developer contributions linked to open space provision alongside funding from the Football Foundation

In July 2023, Cabinet approved the allocation 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 to support the development of the Billingham Sports Hub project. A formal funding application would be made to the Football Foundation later this year and if successful it was anticipated that construction would begin in Spring 2025 and being completed in Spring 2026.

It was intended that the completed facility would be leased to and vested in the National Football Trust (NFT) which was established in 2021 and held charitable status.

RESOLVED that

Billingham Town Centre

1. the vision for Billingham town centre as set out in this report and reflected in the masterplan in exempt Appendix 2, be agreed.
2. the partial acquisition of Billingham town centre, be approved, to enable delivery of redevelopment proposals as outlined in the masterplan and in line with the terms set out in exempt Appendix A.
3. the approach to relocation of affected businesses and demolition of West Precinct, Queensway South and former library buildings for mixed use residential development, infrastructure and public realm improvements, be approved.
4. the intention to bring the former Wynyard House building into use as part of the redevelopment proposals, be noted.
5. Cabinet support a resolution in-principle for the acquisition of the necessary land and rights through use of its compulsory purchase powers in the event that any of the parties were unable to secure the necessary third party land and rights to redevelop Billingham town centre.
6. Delegate to the:-
 - a. Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth in consultation with Director of Finance, Transformation and Performance and Director of Corporate Services the authority to agree the terms to support the relocation of tenants within the town centre.
 - b. Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth, in consultation with Director of Finance, Transformation and Performance and Director of Corporate Services, the authority to negotiate and complete the necessary legal documentation and all other contracts and agreements to give effect to the recommendations above.

Billingham Sports Hub

7. Cabinet gives authority to the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth to make the specific contract award decisions to progress detailed design to RIBA Stage 4 and any subsequent contract variations, annual inflationary uplifts (where allowed in the contract terms and conditions) and extension decisions relating to Billingham Sports Hub.
8. Cabinet approves in principle to vesting the completed facility within the National Football Trust and delegates all legal contracts and final terms in relation Billingham

Sports Hub to the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth to approve in consultation with the Leader of the Council.