

Cabinet

Monday, 18 March 2024

Present: N Redfearn (Elected Mayor) (in the Chair)
Councillors C Johnson, K Clark, P Earley, S Graham,
J Harrison, Janet Hunter, H Johnson, A McMullen
and S Phillips

In Attendance: D Hodgson (Business Sector), D McNally (Age UK
North Tyneside), V Smith (VODA Voluntary and
Community Sector), D Whyte (Northumbria Police),
R Layton (JTUC) and C Black (Young Mayor)

CAB110/23 Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received.

CAB111/23 To Receive any Declarations of Interest and Notification of any Dispensations Granted

Councillor K Clark declared a registerable and personal interest in Item 8 as she is a Director and Employee of Justice Prince CIC which has contracts with North Tyneside Council.

Councillor K Clark declared a registerable and personal interest in Item 9 as she is a Director and Employee of Justice Prince CIC which has contracts with North Tyneside Council.

Councillor C Johnson declared a registerable and personal interest in Item 11 as he is a member of the North Tyneside Trading Company Board and left the room during consideration of the item.

Councillor S Graham declared a registerable and personal interest in Item 11 as he is a member of the North Tyneside Trading Company Board and left the room during consideration of the item.

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CAB112/23 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 February 2024 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

CAB113/23 Report of the Young Mayor

Cabinet received an update from Coby Black, the newly elected Young Mayor of North Tyneside.

Coby informed Cabinet that his pledge is to raise awareness of the dangers of vaping, drinking alcohol and illegal drugs, and work to improve people's health in the community.

Coby advised Cabinet that the newly elected member of Youth Parliament is John Zeng, he is 14 and attends George Stephenson High School, he is the brother of outgoing MYP Sharon and his pledge is to help learn children how to spend smarter through better financial education.

Further updates will be provided as the plans the Youth Councillors hope to achieve are developed.

Last year the Youth Council raised money for Pathways4All and a cheque will be presented tonight for £1600.

Coby advised Cabinet that a number of long serving youth councillors are attending their final youth council tonight as they reach the age of 18 and are concentrating on their A-Levels. Coby asked that thanks be placed on record for their outstanding contribution, some of them being on the Youth Council for 10 years.

Cabinet noted that Coby had been delighted to attend the event arranged to mark the naming of the new town square in Bedford Street, North Shield. As you know the public had voted and Thomas Brown won the vote.

The Ready for Life finance game is now complete and going into schools and colleges. It is hoped that the game will be used as an engaging tool with young people to help them better understand the choices they can make while

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managing their finances. Some Holiday Activity Fund providers have been offered the game and so far 10 sets have been requested.

We have spent time recently preparing for the Young Peoples Conference which will be taking place on 21 March 2024. There are over 120 participants attending from 12 schools across the Borough. The workshops will be looking at Young People's Democracy and we are asking how we can ensure a wider reach to young people.

Coby advised that he was looking forward to update the next Cabinet meeting on how it had all gone and there was an opportunity for decision makers to attend an event here at Council offices to hear first-hand from young people what the issues are planned for Wednesday 5 June it is hoped that Cabinet members will be able to attend.

CAB114/23 We Listen, We Care – Customer Service Programme End of Phase Three

Cabinet were presented with the third, and final, update on the Customer Service Programme.

Councillor Johnson advised that he has been co-chair of the Customer Service Programme Board since 2021 and it's been a pleasure to see the progress and difference it has made.

The End of Phase Three review has been an opportunity to reflect; check-in with what our customers are telling us; and celebrate what has been achieved and the difference it is making. Cabinet were advised that Section 5 of the report highlights these achievements including the creation of a clear set of customer service standards, improvements to the way we work and communicate with customers, through the letters we write and the phone calls we make, and improvements to how customers view the Authority through refreshed branding, to name a few.

The review has also helped to create a clear plan for the future and section 8 in the report describes the priorities for customer service moving forward ensuring the momentum created by the Programme continues and customers remain at the heart of all that we deliver.

Cabinet **RESOLVED** to 1) Note the progress made in Phase Three of the Customer Service Programme, and indeed all Phases of the Programme; 2) agree to the closure of the Customer Service Programme as set out in the report; and 3) agree the future priorities for customer service and experience for the Authority as set out in the report.

(Reason for Decision: The recommendation outlined has been developed following a formal End of Programme review of the Customer Service Programme. The proposal to close the Programme and establish a Customer Service and Experience function will continue to support the ambition set out in the Programme and the four objectives agreed by Cabinet on 28 May 2019.)

CAB115/23 Corporate and Housing Complaint Procedure

Councillor Johnson advised that as he has just updated Cabinet about some of the positive work from the customer service programme – showing how we’re investing more and more into listening and learning from what our residents tell us.

Acting on resident’s complaints has been a big part of this work and I know the officer team, continue to listen, and learn from every complaint they receive.

In November last year, Cabinet were advised about the Housing and Local Government Ombudsman’s consultation on a new joint code of practice. Cabinet asked that Councillor Johnson come back, once the consultation had finished and the new code was published, setting out any changes the council needed to make.

On 8 February, it was announced that there would be two separate codes, one for each Ombudsman. Whilst separate, the Codes include similar advice and guidance about how to deliver a fair and effective complaints process for our residents. The two codes are however very similar, but the Housing Ombudsman requires all changes to be in place from April this year.

Councillor Johnson was therefore pleased to be able to present the new Corporate and Housing Services Complaint Procedure to Cabinet tonight.

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He advised that there were changes to the number of complaints stages our residents need to use, reducing from a Three Stage complaint process to a Two Stage Process.

The Two Stage process has reduced timeframes for responding to complaints with an early and local resolution encouraged to resolve the complaint and prevent the delay for residents who wish to access the Ombudsman. From the date of acknowledgement Stage One being completed within 10 working days and Stage Two 20 working days.

Annual complaints reports will be presented, detailing performance and service improvement for all corporate and housing service complaints. These will be shared annually with the appropriate bodies within the Authority, including Cabinet.

Finally, I'm committed to learning from all customer feedback, including complaints, and I'm grateful to every resident, partner and visitor, who takes the time to share their experiences with us.

Cabinet **RESOLVED** that 1) the Corporate and Housing Services Complaints Procedure be agreed; 2) the Director for Housing and Property Services should bring a further report to Cabinet dealing with the Authority's Housing and Property services complaint's performance and service improvement, including the annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, no later than 30 June 2024; 3) the Assistant Chief Executive should bring a further report to Cabinet dealing with the Authority's corporate complaint's performance and service improvement, including the annual self-assessment against the Local Government Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, no later than November 2024; 4) the Assistant Chief Executive, Director of Housing and Property Services and the Director of Resources, review complaint monitoring, reporting and feedback arrangements, to ensure relevant bodies receive appropriate information about complaint activity and compliance, and report progress of this work in the annual complaint's performance and service improvement reports to Cabinet in 2024 and successive years; and 5) the Assistant Chief Executive and the Director of Housing and Property in consultation with the Deputy Mayor, the Cabinet Member for Housing and the Director of Resources shall be authorised to make amendments or adjustments to the Corporate and Housing Services Complaints Procedure.

(Reason for the Decision: The standards set out in the Corporate Complaint and Housing Service Procedure at Appendix 1 and the complaints processes set out therein, are based on those included in the two new Codes of Practice for complaint handling, published by the LGSCO and HO on 8 February 2024. This followed a national joint consultation held by both Ombudsmen from September 2023 to November 2024. Both Ombudsmen have stated their intent was to introduce gold standard complaint handling procedure across the local government and the social housing sector.)

CAB116/23 Building a Better North Tyneside – Private Sector Housing Plan 2023 – 2028

Cabinet were presented with a report seeking the approval of a new Private Sector Housing Plan 2024–2028.

Cabinet were advised that the plan has been developed to support the delivery of the 2023–2028 Housing Strategy and will directly support the delivery of 5,000 affordable homes and reducing derelict properties. The Authority already has a good track record in driving up standards within Private Sector Housing and it was reported that this work has seen a reduction in empty homes by 35% since 2019, over 60 long-term empty properties being brought back as affordable homes and an additional £25K of Council Tax being recovered from landlords.

It was reported that changes to the Council Tax Empty Homes Premium were approved at a meeting of Full Council on the 23 November 2023 has provided further encouragement to owners of long-term empty properties back into use.

Work has also seen the Authority attract £9.4m of investment for energy efficiency measures in homes across the borough, reducing carbon and saving residents money on their fuel bills.

The Private Sector Housing Plan is built around four themes that focus on providing support to landlords and private rented tenants across the borough as well as tackling bad landlords and empty and derelict properties.

The Annual Delivery Programme outlines the work that will be undertaken in 2024–25 and includes a number of new initiatives including an innovative

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purchasing partnership that will target empty properties in Wallsend to support the Wallsend Town Centre Master Plan and increase delivery of affordable homes. Other highlights include the introduction of a Landlord Accreditation scheme, a new leasing offer for private landlords and the re-introduction of a landlord forum to increase communication with private landlords.

Cabinet were advised that the Private Sector Housing Plan will play a key role in driving up standards in the private rented sector and support the delivery of the strategic objectives within the Our North Tyneside Plan 2021-2025.

Cabinet **RESOLVED** that 1) the Private Sector Housing Plan 2024-2025 and the Delivery Programme included in the plan attached to the report be approved; 2) that the Director of Housing and Property Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Director of Resources and Head of Law be authorised to undertake all necessary work to bring forward the proposals as identified in section 1.5 of the report.

(Reason for the decision: It will support the delivery of the Elected Mayor and Cabinet's commitment within the Our North Tyneside Plan to deliver more quality homes, reduce the number of derelict properties and support the ambition for North Tyneside to be carbon neutral by 2030.)

CAB117/23 2023-2024 Performance and Financial Management Report to 31 January 2024

Councillor Johnson introduced the Performance and Financial Management Report for the current financial year.

Cabinet noted that the report sets out the key areas of service delivery and the performance metrics that are driving the forecast financial position based on the position as at 31 January.

Service delivery across the Authority remains strong, although the Authority continues to manage high levels of demand in a number of areas including education, children's services and adult social care.

Cabinet noted that particular areas of strength include the policy priorities of the Our North Tyneside Plan 2021-2025.

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- The Authority is on track against its commitment to become carbon net-zero by 2030. Carbon reduction in council service operations has decreased by 58% against the baseline year of 2010/11.
- The ambition to deliver 5,000 Affordable Homes is on track against the profiled target, with 2,213 homes delivered at the end of quarter three.
- Council Tax and Business Rates collection remains strong and comparable with national performance.
- Fewer than 80 of the Authority's homes are empty and available for letting, maximising the rental income to invest deliver a range of improvements to meet tenants' needs and maintain their homes to the decent homes standard.
- The Ambition for North Tyneside Programme is progressing regeneration projects across all four areas of the borough.

In line with previous reports, the Authority's Safety Valve Management Plan is forecast to reach a positive in year balance by the end of 2027/28 in relation to high needs education. At the end of December 2023 there are 2,161 EHCPs and the Authority continues to manage the high volume of requests received for assessment, mediations and tribunals. The authority is managing 27 more EHCPs than the safety valve target.

Cabinet will remember that our progress in this area secured additional funding of £19.5m from the Department for Education. A condition of this funding was for regular performance reports to the DfE - three submissions have been made, confirming the Authority is on track against the agreed performance measures.

Home to School Transport Service has a reported pressure of £3.2m partly due to increased inflationary costs, but mostly attributable to the significant increase in the number of pupils with complex needs who need support with transport. The number of pupils in receipt of home to school transport has increased by a third in just five years.

Children's Services in particular is an area of increased demand for the Authority leading to financial pressures. The number of children in care remains higher than the 330 children budgeted for with 370 children in care in January. Along with the placement mix of children in care this has led to a

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worsening of the financial position. There is further detail on performance contained within Annex 1 to this report. The number of children in need decreased to 1,639 from 1721 in November, but remains higher than the core 1,600 budgeted for.

Councillor McMullen summarised the financial position and advised that as has been discussed in previous meetings, it is known that there continues to be significant pressures in 2023/24 and into the medium term.

It was noted that driven by our current performance information, as summarised by Councillor Johnson, the forecast net pressure for the General Fund is £8.4m, an improvement of £0.2m since the position reported in November but an improvement of £3.3m from the position initially reported to Cabinet in July. Many of the pressures in the current year are consistent with those faced in recent years. This includes the impact of inflation, on both in-house delivery and externally commissioned services, as well as rising demand and increased complexity for services within both adults and children's social care. Further detail on each service area is contained within Annex 2 to this report.

Cabinet will note that a programme of work is in place to both manage and mitigate the in-year pressures and the Senior Leadership Team has worked with Senior Officers in across the Authority to consider a range of in-year mitigations that could be explored to support the 2023/24 position. These are included in the forecast position and have helped contribute to the £3.3m improvement since the first budget monitoring report in July.

In terms of Schools, the projected year end deficit position is £5.680m. This is after application of £0.4m of School's in Financial Difficulty funding and £1.9m of DFE funding to further support schools in financial difficulty.

It was reported that it is good to note that there are no material issues in respect of the HRA with regards to its normal activity, however, increase energy costs has seen the HRA position worsen slightly to a £0.1m pressure.

Moving onto the Investment Plan - there are no areas of concern in terms of delivery against our plans, and over £59m has been invested in the Borough so far this financial year. Officers have carried out a further review of the plan, resulting in variations of £0.4m and reprogramming of £10.7m for 2023/24.

Cabinet **RESOLVED** that 1) the update provided on the Performance of the

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Authority including updated data on the key pressures facing the Authority and progress against the Our North Tyneside Plan 2021-2025 be noted; 2) the forecast budget monitoring position for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account (HRA), schools finance and Treasury Management together with the service delivery performance position across the Authority as at 31 January 2024 be noted; 3) the Authority's Investment Plan spend of £59.769m to 31 January 2024 and the proposed financing of the Plan to the end of the year be noted; 4) reprofiling of £10.737m from 2023/24 into future years, and variations of £0.411m within the 2023-2028 Investment Plan be approved and the current position with Developers' Contributions be noted; 5) the receipt of £0.180m new revenue grants and, £0.441m of new capital grants be approved; and 6) the receipt of capital grant funding offers amounting to £0.677m as outlined in the report, which will be reflected in the Investment Plan following discussion at Investment Programme Board be approved.

(Reason for the Decision: the proposals set out in section 1.2 of the report is important in order that Cabinet continues to monitor performance against the Budget, especially given the current level of financial pressures faced by the public sector. It is also important that Cabinet agrees to receive the revenue and capital grants referred to in the report.)

CAB118/23 Corporate Procurement Plan 2024-25

Cabinet is requested to delegate authority to Officers in consultation with Cabinet Members to commence procurement exercises for the services and supplies to support the Authority as detailed in appendix one of the report.

The Authority spends a significant sum with third parties on a wide range of services. Carrying out robust tendering exercises ensures that the Authority receives the best quality goods and services whilst maintaining value for money. Amongst others this year, the Authority will be focussing on waste procurements, with major changes in legislation introducing food waste collections being the focus of our activity for the environmental team.

The contracts identified in appendix one of the report will require procurement exercises to be commenced in financial year 2024/25. These procurement exercises will continue to encourage bids from smaller businesses and will require at least one greener commitment to be made to support the Authorities target to

be carbon net-zero by 2030. These tender exercises will include social value to support the Authorities five key themes within Our North Tyneside Plan.

Social value commitments from contractors have been monitored closely which has resulted in several positive social value achievements from projects across the borough. This has included Christmas gift donations for children in care across the borough, the provision and installation of defibrillators in our sheltered accommodation. Several contractors provided materials and labour to help DIY SOS renovate the "True Colours" Theatre in Wallsend.

Social value commitments made by our suppliers continue to support career events in schools within the borough.

Cabinet **RESOLVED** that 1) the procurement of goods and services as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report be approved; 2) the key achievements in social value for the Borough via procurement activity carried out in 2023 as set out in Appendix 2 of the report be noted; 3) authority be delegated to the relevant Director in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member, Director of Resources and the Head of Law to commence the procurements identified and award contracts to those bidders who submit the most advantageous tenders in accordance with UK public procurement legislation.

(Reason for the decision: the Authority has a duty to obtain value for money. Tendering the opportunities identified in the report will meet the priorities contained within the Procurement Strategy and Our North Tyneside Plan.)

CAB119/23 Exclusion Resolution

RESOLVED that under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and having applied a public interest test as defined in Part 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

Reasons for taking the item in private: The report in items (11 and 12) below contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding the information).

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CAB120/23 North Tyneside Trading Company Business Plan 2024-2028

Cabinet were requested to approve the North Tyneside Trading Company's 2024-2028 Strategic Business Plan for 2024-2028.

Cabinet **RESOLVED** that the North Tyneside Trading Company Limited Strategic Business Plan 2024-2028 be agreed.

(Reason for the Decision: It will support the delivery of the Elected Mayor and Cabinet's commitments within the Our North Tyneside Plan to deliver more quality affordable homes, tackle derelict properties and support the ambition for North Tyneside to be carbon neutral by 2030.)

CAB121/23 Highpoint View, Whitley Bay

Cabinet were asked to agree to proposed changes to the financial close down arrangements of the Highpoint View Project, Whitley Bay. This project has successfully delivered 14 new homes at the coast in Whitley Bay through a joint venture with a development partner and co-owner of the original site.

Cabinet **RESOLVED** that 1) the proposed changes to the financial arrangements for closing down the Highpoint View Project as detailed in the report be agreed; and 2) the Director of Resources in consultation with the Head of Law be authorised to enter such agreements or variations and take any other steps that may be necessary to enable the authority to accept receipt of the payment in final settlement of the financial obligations associated with the Highpoint View Project.

(Reason for the Decision: The recommended option, is considered to be the best way to secure close down of the Highpoint View Project during the current financial year which would provide the Authority with a payment based on the distribution of the net proceeds.)

CAB122/23 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday 20 May 2024 at 6.00pm

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Minutes published on 21 March 2024.

The decisions contained within these Minutes may be implemented (unless called in by 3 Non-Executive Members for consideration by the Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee) immediately following the expiry of the call-in period; i.e. 5.00pm on 28 March 2024.