

## **Cabinet**

**Monday, 21 September 2020**

**Present:** N Redfearn (Elected Mayor) (in the Chair)  
Councillors G Bell, S Cox, S Day, P Earley, R Glendon,  
M Hall, C Johnson and B Pickard

**In Attendance:** S McKenzie (Young Mayor)  
R Layton (North Tyneside Joint Trades Union Committee)  
D McNally (Age UK)  
M Walton (Business Representative)

**Apologies:** Councillor C Burdis and R Fry (Voluntary and Community Sector Representative)

### **CAB149/20 Introduction and Opening Remarks**

Mrs Norma Redfearn, Elected Mayor, welcomed everyone to this meeting of North Tyneside Council's Cabinet which was the fourth virtual Cabinet meeting held by the Authority following the introduction of regulations by the Government enabling local authorities to conduct their meetings remotely in the light of the current Coronavirus pandemic.

She referred to the introduction of new restrictions in the North East region to curb the spread of the Covid-19 virus in the light of the increasing infection rates across the area. The restrictions had been granted by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care following approaches made by the leaders and elected mayors of the five Tyne and Wear local authorities, Durham and Northumberland County Councils and the North East Combined Authority.

The Elected Mayor also announced that following a further approach by the North East leaders and elected mayors, the Government had now agreed to amend those measures to allow families to continue their usual childcare arrangements.

### **CAB150/20 To Receive any Declarations of Interest and Notification of any Dispensations Granted**

No declarations of interest were reported.

### **CAB151/20 Minutes**

**Resolved** that the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 3 August 2020 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

### **CAB152/20 Report of the Young Mayor**

The Young Mayor reported on the following activities in which she and Young Cabinet Members and/or Youth Councillors had been involved:

- The young people's mental health wristbands and Z Cards had now been

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distributed to schools and colleges in the borough to be given out to students aged 11 to 18 years who were in school years 7 to 13.

- The Young Mayor had been invited to be part of the Young People's Wellbeing Partnership Board. The Board was currently working on improving the wellbeing support in school for students. This complemented the Young Mayor's own pledge to create better support in schools for mental health issues and work on improving and promoting positive mental health and wellbeing.
- The Young Mayor and another young Cabinet Member had been chosen to design and create the International Youth Mayor Association website.
- Youth Councillor and Knife Crime Ambassador, Abigail, and the Young Mayor had recently attended a Safer North Tyneside Partnership Board meeting. Abigail was pleased to have been invited by the Elected Mayor to be part of the new BAME group.
- The Young Mayor had been invited to be part a new recognition scheme for volunteers in the borough.
- The Young Mayor had attended the North East Protect Our Future E-Convention' which Member of UK Youth Parliament Abi had planned and hosted.
- At the last Climate Emergency Board meeting Abi had reported on the major concerns and possible solutions to some of the areas that had been looked at in the workshops. Abi had also been taking part in the 'Act Now Leadership Programme', which was run by the British Youth Council in partnership with Green Peace. This programme taught young people social action to help fight climate change. Abi had also been chosen by the British Youth Council to be part of the speaker's session organised by Greenpeace. She had also been selected to represent young people in the country on climate at the All-Party Parliamentary Group.
- North Tyneside CCG had visited the Youth Council meeting to give a demonstration on the Livi app.

The Elected Mayor thanked the Young Mayor for the report.

### **CAB153/20 2020/21 Financial Management Report to 31 July 2020**

Cabinet considered the second monitoring report outlining the 2020/21 financial position. It provided the latest indication of the potential revenue and capital financial position of the Authority as at 31 March 2021.

The report covered the forecast outturn of the Authority's General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) revenue budget including management mitigations where issues had been identified; the delivery of 2020/21 approved budget savings plans; an indication of the impact of Covid-19 on Collection Rates and on the Collection Fund; the implications of Covid-19 for the Authority's cash position; and an update on the Capital Investment Plan including details of variations and reprogramming that were recommended for approval.

The forecast overall pressure for the General Fund Revenue Account was estimated at £11.410m against the approved net budget. This was made up of a forecasted pressure of £0.781m on normal activities and £10.629m relating to the impact of Covid-19. The £0.781m pressure in the services was driven mainly by Health, Education, Care & Safeguarding reflecting the continued pressures in Children's Services of £4.799m and Adult Services of £0.924m, partly mitigated by the contingency balances that had been created as part of the 2018/19 budget setting process and continued to be held centrally to reflect the on-going pressures in social care being felt locally and nationally.

Included in this projection was £3.929m of pressures in Corporate Parenting and Placements, £1.866m in Wellbeing and Assessment, and £1.060m in Integrated Disability and Additional Needs. The drivers for these pressures continued from 2019/20 were outlined in the report.

It was anticipated that the outturn forecast for normal activities would improve over the course of the financial year as planned remedial actions began to impact on both expenditure and income.

With regards to the impact of Covid-19, the main drivers behind the £10.629m shortfall were also within Health, Education, Care and Safeguarding where £13.699m was for increased costs to the Authority of supporting the market (£5.533m), impact on savings targets (£2.713m), additional demand (£2.110m), increased costs for children in care (£1.238m) and lost income within School Improvement (£0.873m).

Significant Covid-19 related pressures existed in Environment, Housing and Leisure, (£6.748m) due to loss of income in Sport & Leisure and Highways & Transport and in Commissioning & Asset Management through income lost within Catering (£4.260m).

Like all authorities North Tyneside was seeing a clear financial impact as a result of the pandemic and current indications were that the Covid-19 funding received to date did not cover all anticipated costs/loss of income. Discussions were on-going at both local and national level around the financing of the residual pressures expected as a result of Covid-19.

The report outlined the revenue grants which had been received during June and July 2020.

The total planned deficit for schools in 2020/21 was £6.689m. The Authority had been working with schools for a number of years with regard to the long-term strategic issue of surplus secondary places and the associated financial pressures which continued to be compounded by rising employment costs. As anticipated, 2019/20 was the fifth year of balances decreasing following a long-term trend of rising balances in North Tyneside and the overall projected balances for 2020/21 continued this trend.

As well as school balances reducing overall, some schools continued to face significant financial challenges. There were twelve schools with deficit budget plan in 2020/21, with seven of these schools continuing to be in deficit following 2019/20 and five schools that were new to deficit in 2020/21.

The High Needs Block had ended 2019/20 with a pressure of £4.542m. Initial forecasting of the budget position for 2020/21 indicated an anticipated in-year pressure of £2.470m reflecting a further rise in demand for special school places. The Authority was planning for

places at the end of 2020/21 to total approximately 786.

The Housing Revenue Account was forecast to have year-end balances at 31 March 2021 of £6.529m, assuming all identified Covid-19 related costs and income shortfalls were covered centrally. The balances were £1.525m higher than budget which had been set at £5.004m, mainly as a result of higher opening balances due to the impact of the previous year's financial performance but there was also an in-year estimated underspend of £1.314m, against an in-year budget of £2.590m, due to underspends arising on repairs budgets from Covid-19 impacts (£0.713m) combined with forecast vacancy savings of £0.151m.

Universal Credit had been fully implemented across North Tyneside on 2 May 2018. As of 10 August 2020, 3,913 North Tyneside Homes tenants had moved on to Universal Credit and a team was working proactively with tenants to minimise arrears. This position would be closely monitored as the year progressed to identify any adverse impacts on the budget position.

The approved 2020-2025 Investment Plan totalled £268.208m and was detailed in the Annex. The Annex also set out the delivery progress to date, planned delivery for 2020/21, reprogramming and other variations identified through the Investment Programme governance process.

An officer led review of the Investment Plan had resulted in proposals for reprogramming of £1.576m and variations of £2.872m of which more details were set out in the Annex to the report. The revised Investment Plan stood at £76.795m for 2020/21 and to the end of July 2020 spend of £5.154m had been incurred which represented 6.71% of the revised plan.

The report also outlined progress against the 2020-2024 Our North Tyneside Plan which set out the overall vision and policy context within which the Financial Plan and Budget were set.

The Authority had plans in place to deliver all elements of the Council Plan and performance against these plans was carefully monitored. The area under most financial pressure was Health, Education, Care and Safeguarding.

In Adult Social Care, as with most local authorities, and in line with the national picture, North Tyneside had seen costs continued to rise. Along with the number of adults supported increasing over the last few financial years, the individual needs of those residents had increased due to people living longer with multiple complex conditions. Supporting those needs required more intensive packages of care which were more expensive to provide. In addition to older people, younger adults with learning disabilities and physical disabilities were also living longer, often with multiple complex issues.

In Children's Services, good progress continued to be made on engaging with children in the early years of life to ensure that they were ready for school. Safeguarding vulnerable children and maximising their educational attainment remained key priorities.

Over recent years, there had been an increase nationally in demand for children's residential placements but with no corresponding increase in central government funded provision. As such, the levels of looked after children (LAC) and children who required

supervision after leaving care continued to generate a significant financial pressure. Data suggested that LAC levels, whilst fluctuating, there was a general trend of a steady increase in numbers, but there was a wide range of levels of care provided, with more complex cases now being faced.

Cabinet considered the following decision options: either to agree the recommendations as set out in Section 1.2 of the report, or alternatively to disagree with the proposals.

**Resolved** that (1) the forecast budget monitoring position for the General Fund, Collection Fund, Schools' Finance and Housing Revenue Account as at 31 July 2020, as set out in the Annex to the report, be noted;

(2) the receipt of £3.489m new revenue grants be approved;

(3) the Authority's Investment Plan spend of £5.154m to 31 July 2020 and the financing of the Plan to the end of the year, as set out in the Annex to the report, be noted; and

(4) the variations of £2.872m and reprogramming of £1.576m for 2020-21 within the 2020 - 2025 Investment Plan, as set out in the Annex to the report, be approved.

(Reasons for decision: It is important that Cabinet continues to monitor performance against the Budget, especially given the current level of financial pressures faced by the public sector.)

#### **CAB154/20 Poverty Intervention Fund**

Cabinet received a report on the proposed approach for the delivery of the Poverty Intervention Fund which was included in the Authority's Budget for 2020/21. As previously agreed by Cabinet on 29 June 2020, the overall aim of the Fund was to enable support to families and individuals to alleviate the impacts of living in poverty.

An assessment of evidence of how poverty impacted across North Tyneside, including the outcome of engagement with individual Cabinet Members and key external stakeholders, had been presented to the cross-party Steering Group in July 2020. Based on this evidence, the Steering Group had considered which key groups to target with the fund and what the impacts of poverty were on those groups.

The Steering Group had been presented with evidence on the impacts of poverty in North Tyneside as follows:

- children – key impacts being their experience at school and on their mental health
- older people – key impacts being not taking up full benefit entitlement and social isolation/loneliness
- families with children – key impacts being not being able to afford essentials such as school uniform and food during school holidays and domestic violence or abuse

The Steering Group supported the proposed priority groups to be targeted through initiatives supported by the Fund. Based on the evidence-based discussion at the Steering Group it was proposed that the fund would be delivered in a phased approach, with the first phase focusing on four priorities:

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- for children – focusing on the key impact which living in poverty had in relation to their experience at school (there were currently 5,641 children in North Tyneside who were entitled to free school meals due to low income)
- for older people – focusing on the key impact of not taking up full benefit entitlement
- for families with children – focusing on the key impact of not being able to afford the essentials of clothing for school and food during school holidays (where they did not have access to free school meals)

It was also a priority for the Steering Group that these initiatives wherever possible be delivered in partnership with or by local organisations in particular from within the community and voluntary sector.

The following specific initiatives were proposed to be funded through the Poverty Intervention Fund to address the key impact of poverty on the priority groups for North Tyneside, further details of which were set out in the report:

- Poverty proofing the school day (initial allocation £172,755)
- Benefits take-up campaign and support (initial allocation £100,000)
- School appropriate clothing (initial allocation £253,845 based on current numbers of children on free school meals)
- Holiday food (initial allocation £200,000)

The Elected Mayor, Cabinet Members, the Young Mayor and partners welcomed the report and the opportunity the proposals presented to make a real difference to the day to day lives of those who needed support the most, particularly at the present time as the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic continued in the Borough.

Cabinet considered the following decision options: to agree the proposed approach to operate the Poverty Intervention Fund including proposed priorities and initiatives as set out in paragraphs 1.6.1 to 1.6.2 of the report or alternatively not to agree the proposed approach to operate the Poverty Intervention Fund.

**Resolved** that (1) the proposed priorities and initiatives for the Poverty Intervention Fund, as set out in the report, be approved; and (2) the Head of Corporate Strategy and Customer Service, in consultation with the Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, be authorised to take all other steps necessary to implement these proposals.

(Reason for decision: to allow the Poverty Intervention Fund to be established from September 2020.)

### **CAB155/20 Public Spaces Protection Orders**

Cabinet received a report on the outcome of the consultation undertaken over a 6-week period from 14 July to 24 August 2020 on proposals to extend the current Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) in the Borough for a further 3 years.

Details of the methods of consultation were set out in the report. The Authority had received

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180 responses to the online questionnaire and a further 4 responses by other means. Overall, respondents provided huge support to the proposal to extend the PSPOs.

In relation to dog controls:

- 95% supported the continuation of the borough wide PSPO controlling dog fouling and failing to pick up
- 92% supported the continuation of the PSPO excluding dogs from designated play sites
- 74% supported the continuation of the PSPO excluding dogs from designated beaches during the period 1 May to 30 September
- 85% supported the continuation of the PSPO requiring dogs to be on a lead in designated public spaces
- 90% supported the continuation of the PSPO requiring a dog to be put on a lead when directed to do so.

In relation to alcohol controls 87% supported the continuation of the borough wide PSPO controlling the nuisance of on-street drinking.

In addition to the questions asked, respondents had also been invited to provide comments on each of the PSPOs which had led to 251 individual comments being made. These had been analysed to identify key emerging themes.

Themes that had emerged in relation to dog controls were the availability and use of bins; levels of enforcement; better signage; and making changes to the scope of the control excluding dogs from beaches (there was a mix of opposing views with some seeking a relaxation and others seeking an extension).

Themes that had emerged in relation to alcohol controls were reflections on alcohol-related disorder during the Covid-19 pandemic; levels of enforcement; and extending the scope to cover other environmental problems such as littering.

Two respondents had used the opportunity during the consultation to request that new PSPOs be considered to tackle specific nuisance in their local area.

A more detailed summary of the conclusions was included in Appendix 3 to the report.

North Tyneside was one of the safest places in England to live, work and visit. However, tackling environmental crime was a key priority of the Elected Mayor. Additional officer capacity had been introduced which included new community protection wardens and an environmental rapid response team. Also, a new CCTV vehicle had been introduced along with more CCTV cameras which were capable of being redeployed to tackle identified hotspots for anti-social behaviour and environmental crime.

Having legal powers available to deter environmental crime and to take action when it was appropriate to do so was key to ensuring that the borough remained a great place to live, work and visit. PSPOs provided the Authority with an important enforcement tool.

In the 2018 Residents Survey 48% of residents had highlighted a clean environment as being one of the most important factors to them in making the borough a good place to live and fewer than 55% reported feeling safe after dark. The importance to residents of being

able to address crime and tackle anti-social behaviour had increased at a national level as well as locally in North Tyneside.

The Authority had a published Statement of Enforcement Policy which was based on taking a proportionate approach towards achieving compliance with the law. Considerable community engagement was undertaken by the Authority's community protection and environment teams. In some circumstances formal enforcement was however required, and available data included:

- 49 Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued between October 2017 and March 2020
- Six out of ten Fixed Penalty Notices issued had been in relation to dog fouling offences and three out ten for dog control offences
- Following the PSPOs being made in October 2017, the number of reported dog fouling incidents had decreased year on year, whereas prior to this, the number of reported incidents had been showing a steady increase since 2013/14
- During 2019/20, 449 dog fouling incidents had been reported to the Authority, 424 in 2018/19, compared to 585 incidents during 2017/18 and 537 in 2016/17.

Given the outcome of the public consultation and both the context and evidence provided above it was recommended that Cabinet could be satisfied on reasonable grounds that extending the current PSPOs was necessary to prevent the occurrence or recurrence of the activities identified in the PSPOs after the expiry of the PSPOs; or an increase in the frequency or seriousness of those activities after the expiry of the PSPOs.

Should Cabinet decide to extend the PSPOs for a 3-year period the Orders attached at Appendix 4 to the report would be made implementing that decision. In addition, it was proposed that the key themes that had emerged from the public consultation responses be considered further by officers with oversight provided by the relevant Cabinet Members. Any action that was considered appropriate would be taken in consultation with Cabinet.

Cabinet considered the following decision options: To agree to the recommendations set out in Section 1.2 of the report; or alternatively not to agree to the recommendation set out in Section 1.2 of the report and instruct that an alternative approach be taken.

**Resolved** that (1) the consultation exercise undertaken on the proposed extension of Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) for a further period of 3 years and the consultation responses as outlined in the report be noted;

(2) approval be given to the making of the Orders at Appendix 4 of the report that will extend the Public Spaces Protection Orders made on 20 October 2017 for a period of 3 years;

(3) the Head of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Head of Environment, Housing and Leisure, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport and the Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Engagement be authorised to:

(a) correct any minor drafting errors that may be identified in the Orders referred to in (2) above, and make minor amendments including deletions and insertions that may be necessary to ensure that the Orders extending the Public Spaces Protection Orders reflect the intentions of Cabinet as set out in the report; and

(b) make the Orders at Appendix 4 of the report subject to the correction of any minor amendments in accordance with (a) above and to undertake all ancillary matters associated with this resolution including the signing of the Orders on behalf of the Authority; and

(4) the Head of Environment, Housing and Leisure, the Cabinet Member for Environment



and Transport and the Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Engagement be authorised to consider the key emerging themes arising from the public consultation and undertake any action that is considered appropriate.

(Reason for decision: the PSPOs in place within the borough will expire at midnight on 19 October 2020. If the PSPOs are not extended before their expiry they will cease to have effect resulting in the Authority having no controls in place to tackle anti-social behaviour relating to dogs and the irresponsible consumption of alcohol in public spaces and the detrimental effect that such behaviour can have on the quality of life of those in the community. Given the outcome of the public consultation exercise coupled with the other available evidence Cabinet can be reasonably satisfied that extending the PSPOs currently in place is necessary to prevent the occurrence or recurrence of the activities identified in the PSPOs after the expiry of the PSPOs , or an increase in the frequency or seriousness of those activities after the expiry of the PSPOs).

### **CAB156/20 An Ambition for North Tyneside - Update**

Cabinet received an update report on the delivery of the Council's 'Ambition for North Tyneside' that had been agreed on 26 November 2018 as a framework for the regeneration of the borough in line with the Our North Tyneside Plan and the themes of 'our people', 'our place' and 'our economy'.

The report explained what had been achieved to date as well as setting out the planned activities across the borough over the next 12 months and beyond. To support the ongoing delivery of those schemes identified in 'Our Ambition for North Tyneside', there was an allocation of £2m per annum for the next five years within the Authority's budget.

The report set out in detail progress made in each part of the Borough – South West; North West; North East; and South East – over the last 18 months, what was currently planned and what would happen next (subject to funding) and what the Authority would do, if it could, and when it could.

The plan contained a broad range of physical projects which developed North Tyneside as a place. However, North Tyneside was nothing without its people. It was the businesses and shoppers that made the town centres, the visitors, residents and businesses that brought to life the attractions at the coast and residents and visitors that filled the Borough's parks and wagonways with activity.

Just as this programme was designed to be for all of North Tyneside it was designed for all of the people of North Tyneside wherever they lived. Many of the projects that had been delivered and would be delivered were shaped with that in mind. For example, the development of the hotel and restaurant at The Spanish City had been done in partnership to create a Work Academy that allowed residents who had limited experience of work to undergo training and then have a guaranteed interview. The proposals at Swan Hunters had at their heart, the delivery of new jobs on that site.

An initial breakdown of the proposed funding allocation was set out in the report, with the Authority's financial commitment of £3.6m to support the delivery of the schemes in tranche 1 and £39m of external funding that had been identified.

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Progress on the Our Ambition Plan would be monitored by the Deputy Mayor, and regular reports on progress would be reported to Cabinet. Property related projects would be dealt with via the Strategic Property Group chaired by the Elected Mayor. Investment projects were overseen by the Investment Programme Board, which was chaired by the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources and included the Deputy Mayor. Specific project and working groups would be established to handle more significant projects with appropriate Elected Member and Chief Officer leadership.

The next steps would include further project development including refining delivery plans and funding mix; options on the major projects moving through appropriate governance; and finalising the Investment Programme based on a £10m budget over 5 years.

There were no decision options set out for Cabinet's consideration as the report was for information purposes only.

**Resolved** that (1) the progress made in delivering the overall 'An Ambition for North Tyneside' plan since November 2018 be noted; (2) the projects to be delivered in 2020/21 and beyond be noted; and (3) the Plan continue to be monitored by the Investment Programme Board and progress reported regularly to Cabinet.

### **CAB157/20 Housing and Construction Procurement of Suppliers of Materials and Sub-Contractors**

Cabinet received a report on the re-procurement of suppliers and sub-contractors following the expiry of the initial 2-year contract term following the transfer of the housing repairs, maintenance and construction service from Kier to the Authority.

The original contracts had an extension period built in, however it was deemed inappropriate to extend the contracts due to some market failures during the contract period and/or change to the Authority's requirements.

Lessons learned from the previous exercise showed that there was a market for the services that the Authority required. The services procured in 2019 had been well received by tenants, with a seamless transition. High quality products had been maintained, and the team had engaged with suppliers and customers to pilot new products which had been well received.

It was intended that frameworks would be established with multiple suppliers, with larger packages of works being subject to mini-competition exercise. This would ensure value for money for the Authority. The frameworks would be for an initial term of either 2 or 3 years with an option to extend for a further year dependant on service requirements.

The following goods and services would be procured:

- Materials (plumbing, electrical, building, painting, timber, skips, glass and kitchens)
- Services (fencing, painting, minor works, scaffolding, roofing, plumbing and heating and electrical works)
- Design consultancy services

A new kitchen unit supplier was required and engagement would take place with tenants

prior to the award of this contract.

Savings associated with the Construction Project and savings in the first year were circa £5.311 million. The spend within the borough had increased by 17% from previous years following the transfer of the service. It was hoped to surpass this in the re-procurement exercise.

A large majority of material suppliers were large national companies. However, it may now be possible to increase the local supply chain by re-packaging the offer to the market. The Covid-19 crisis had changed the supply chain, and some suppliers were now unfortunately in administration. The Authority had supported the supply chain where possible using supplier relief, business rates relief and the discretionary grant and would continue to engage with businesses and customers prior to commencing the tender exercise to ensure full understanding of the new emerging marketplace.

During the original procurement exercise engagement through social media had been successful with over 250 businesses attending events to understand the business on offer. This would be replicated as part of the re-procurement exercise. Virtual briefings would be provided together with a number of short 'how to' videos. Procurement pages and links to external organisations would be updated and would be easier to navigate. This would ensure smaller suppliers were able to tender.

The materials and services tender would support the Authority's carbon reduction and recycling ambitions. Utilising the social value principles within the Procurement Strategy, the Authority would gain commitments of local employment and apprenticeships. This would contribute to the economic recovery of North Tyneside in the wake of the Covid crisis. The principles set out in the Authority's Responsible Procurement Charter would be embedded in the tender requirements.

Cabinet considered the following decision options: to approve the recommendations set out in paragraph 1.2 to carry out the necessary procurement exercises; or alternatively to not approve the recommendations and continue to carry out tender opportunities for each package of works and/or services.

**Resolved** that (1) the procurement of the goods and services as detailed in the report be approved; and  
(2) the Head of Environment, Housing and Leisure, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, the Head of Resources and the Head of Law and Governance, be authorised to commence a procurement to establish frameworks and award contracts to those bidders who represent the most economically advantageous tender and any subsequent call-off contracts.

(Reasons for 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. Should individual opportunities be tendered value for money and the associated benefits may not be achieved.)

## **CAB158/20 Complaints Service Report 2019-20**

Cabinet considered a report which detailed complaint related activity during 2019-20 and

which complied with the requirement to publish a report on complaints under the relevant statutory complaints legislation.

The Authority undertook millions of transactions with its 204,000 residents and 6.6 million visitors to the Borough throughout the year. Against that background, the number of complaints received by the Authority remained consistently low, reflecting the excellent services the Authority's customers received and its ability to resolve swiftly any issues that did arise at the first point of contact.

The number of formal complaints during 2019-20 remained static compared to the previous year as the Authority continued to take a proactive approach to encouraging residents and service users to provide feedback. The Authority's complaint leaflet entitled 'How to complain about Council services' was widely available in the Authority's buildings and to download from the Authority's website. It was also now easy for customers to contact the Authority on-line, and Social Care Service users were provided with a complaint leaflet at the first point of contact.

Customer satisfaction with the complaints process remained relatively high and the Authority continued to resolve the vast majority of complaints at Stage 1. The Authority welcomed complaints as valuable feedback from its customers and complaint outcomes provided valuable lessons to further improve and enhance the Authority's services and procedures.

The Authority operated statutory complaint procedures for Adult Social Care and Children and Young People's Services and Public Health. It also provided a corporate complaints procedure for all other services.

During 2019-20, the Authority had responded to Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) enquiries in a timely fashion and was well within the required timescale for response of 28 days. The LGSCO's annual review of complaints for 2019-20 was detailed in the report at Appendix 2.

The Authority's complaints service report for 2019-20 at Appendix 1 showed that the overall number of formal complaints had remained static in comparison to 2018-19 (1,070 complaints and 1,069 complaints respectively).

The number of social care complaints (relating to both Adult Social Care and Children and Young People's Services) had increased slightly from 97 in 2019-19 to 102 in 2019-20 (49 cases in Children's Social Services and 53 cases in Adult Social Care).

A breakdown of the numbers and categories of complaints was provided in the report.

The Authority had proposed to establish a programme that aimed to improve customer services and to demonstrate that "we listen and we care". This programme had four parts: Customer Promise, Brilliant Basics, Customer Focussed Services and Better Never Stops – a continuous improvement culture.

Better Never Stops would examine how the Authority collected queries, feedback and complaints. It would look at the quality and consistency of the Authority's responses and how the feedback was used to gather and inform ongoing service delivery. The Authority would also develop the way its employees acted to drive up the standard the

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Authority had set itself and how to recognise and celebrate good customer service.

A key aim of the complaint process was 'learning' from complaints and connects with the Better Never Stops programme. There had been several changes to procedures and practice during 2019-20 as a result of resolved complaints, examples of which were given in the report.

Complaints were now widely recognised as integral to the provision of quality services at both individual and strategic levels. The Authority's successful history and current good practice in effective complaint handling would be an integral service improvement driver in the current rapidly changing culture. The demands of maintaining and increasing levels of customer satisfaction, coupled with organisational changes across public and partner sectors, would be well supported by the current robust complaint handling procedures and electronic system in place.

Cabinet considered the following decision options: to note the content of the report and approve publication of the report; or alternatively to refer the report back to officers and request that further analysis and information is provided.

**Resolved** that (1) the complaint related activity during 2019-20, as set out in the Annual Complaints Report (Appendix 1), be noted; (2) the Report be approved for publication by the Head of Law and Governance; and (3) the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Annual Review of complaints concerning North Tyneside Council for 2019-20 (Appendix 2) be noted.

(Reasons for decision: All local authorities providing 'social service functions' including North Tyneside Council are legally required to publish an annual report on complaints received. Publication of a report also supports community engagement and promotes transparency and opportunities for organisational improvement.)

### **CAB159/20 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

6.00pm on Monday 19 October 2020.

### **Minutes published on Thursday 24 September 2020.**

**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 Thursday 1 October 2020.**