

Overview, Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee

Monday, 18 January 2021

Present: Councillor S Graham (Chair)
Councillors B Burdis, K Clark, M Green, Janet Hunter,
A McMullen, A Newman, P Oliver, M Rankin, M Ord,
Rev M Vine, D Cox, W Samuel and S Fallon

Apologies: Councillors A Austin and J Kirwin

OV67/20 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Councillor P Oliver declared a non-registerable personal interest in item 6 Children and Young Peoples Plan 2021-2025. She has a family member in receipt of SEND services.

OV68/20 Minutes

Resolved that the minute of the meeting held on 9 November 2020 be confirmed.

OV69/20 Annual Report of the Elected Mayors

The Elected Mayor, Norma Redfearn, attended the meeting to share the Council's achievements in the past year and her priorities for the year ahead .

There was no doubt that the year had been different to anything that had been experienced. It had been a time of ambiguity and uncertainty both nationally and locally. The pandemic, which was once discussed and thought about in theoretical terms, had become a reality and one that had and will continue to deal with and manage

Responding the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic continued to make it an extremely busy time and many things had been done differently and with great speed.

The Mayor thanked her Cabinet colleagues, Council Members, Chief Executive, Senior Leadership Team and officers for their support and commitment.

Staff had continued to ensure that bins were emptied, that the most vulnerable residents were cared for and supported, that children were provided with a school meal. All staff rose to the challenge and at times risked their lives to ensure services were delivered and she praised their bravery.

The Good Neighbour Scheme in conjunction with North Tyneside VODA had also been a tremendous resource throughout the pandemic and she thanked the volunteers for the support they provided.

When the Covid-19 restrictions came into place, the regular Listening Events in Town Centres on a Saturday morning were put on hold. Something which would return in the

future when it is considered safe to do so.

Targeted engagement activity to seek the views of residents had continued to take place, with the feedback providing an opportunity to hear issues of real importance to residents and would be adapted for the borough accordingly.

The aim now, was to drive forward the recovery from Covid-19 through the Council Plan. While concentrating on managing local outbreaks and keeping people safe, the Council and partners were trying to continue to protect the recovery of North Tyneside.

She stated that there was real importance to make sure children and young people could stay in education and catch up.

There are several ambitious plans for changing North Tyneside and investing in the borough.

In looking to the future, it was important to evaluate and analyse what can be done differently, to help and reshape services in the future, with continuous development of plans to make North Tyneside an even greater place to live, work and visit.

The focus would continue to be on three key priorities – our people, our place, and our economy with the aim of delivering positive opportunities for everyone in the borough.

Children & Young People

The plan ensures that the Council works better for residents by improving how it does things and allowing more opportunities to volunteer, be more independent and do more for local communities. Something that had clearly been demonstrated during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Covid-19 Support Hub, set up in March with VODA to help protect the most vulnerable residents and several other wonderful community and voluntary organisations, businesses and many, many volunteers had helped fulfil requests into the hub. This included picking up prescriptions, household supplies and grocery shopping, as well as making regular welfare calls, checking people had food and spending time talking to them. This had become a lifeline for many, and she stated she was overwhelmed by the generosity of others and the unity shown by the community.

Despite the challenges of Covid-19, schools, colleges and training providers continued to work hard to carefully manage their robust safety measures, giving parents the confidence to return their children to the classroom to progress their education, wellbeing and wider development.

She praised parents and carers for the fantastic job in home schooling during lockdown and recognised that they were doing so whilst juggling their day-to-day commitments.

She stated that the gap between the have and have nots had become more apparent and there was a need to look to what could be done to reduce that.

Earlier in the year, Children's Services were rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted, following rigorous inspection of its Children's Social Care Services. Inspectors assessed the Council and its

partners on the effectiveness of services to help and protect children, the experiences and progress of children in care, including adoption, fostering and the use of residential care and care leavers.

The inspectors report described North Tyneside social work as ‘thriving’ and ‘transformational’. They reported that the children and families who need extra support were “really benefiting” from the services. In addition, that the “impressive level of investment in participation and engagement was empowering children and young people”.

It had been a difficult year for A level students in North Tyneside and across the country. Not only had they missed school because of the pandemic they also had significant disruption in receiving their exam results.

However, the young people in North Tyneside were resilient and the Council would continue to give them and their schools all the support they need.

The GCSE results day was very different to the experience to that in the past and the Mayor wrote to government to express her feelings about the injustice of how the A-Level and GCSE results situation had been dealt with.

Older People

In relation to our older people of the borough. Throughout the pandemic the Council continued to provide comprehensive support to care homes and new ways of accessing services included virtual face to face sessions. This had continued to promote the health and wellbeing of the most vulnerable residents.

Poverty Intervention Fund

The Mayor reported that children, older people, and low-income families were benefitting from a new £1 million poverty intervention fund. The fund aims were to help reduce the impacts of poverty on families and individuals and address the many ways living in poverty can affect residents.

Additionally, families who were entitled to free school meals would receive help with the cost of school clothing, including winter coats and shoes, as well as free food and meals during school holidays.

The fund also aimed to improve older people’s quality of life by supporting them to access their benefit entitlements. As Older people were often impacted by poverty more than they need to be and this was simply because they are not taking up their full benefit entitlement. To address this the fund would deliver an end-to-end benefit take up campaign, providing advice and worker support to those who need help to make a claim.

Spirit of North Tyneside

During the pandemic the ‘Spirit of North Tyneside’ programme was created to acknowledge and celebrate all of the people who helped to make a difference, whether that is going the extra mile to support vulnerable residents or a community effort, whether it be an act of kindness, signing up to volunteer, or developing a new scheme to support people who were shielding. The Spirit of North Tyneside recognition scheme now incorporates many of our annual awards including the Chair’s Commendation Scheme and the Young Mayor’s Award.

BAME Task Group

The Mayor established the BAME Task Group and at the first meeting there was representation from a number of different organisations including; Walking with; Show Racism the Red Card; Radeem Church, RCCG; New to UK; Representative Council of North East Jewry; Whitley Bay Islam Cultural Centre; Trade Union Committee; DWP ; Tyneside CCG and VODA.

As well as discussing its membership the group considered information about the different ethnic groups which make up our community in North Tyneside and agreed to focus on hate crime; recruitment; training for staff; learning English as a second language; engagement and support networks in the community; cultural events; education; health and employment and skills.

Each of these important issues will be considered at future meetings of the Task Group.

Our place

For the South West

Swan Hunters

Following the Cabinet's decision, the sale of the former Swan Hunter site was completed, bringing the site back into beneficial economic use which meets the Council's (and funders) objectives around job creation and economic growth.

Centre for Innovation

The second phase of the Centre for Innovation was completed which provides floorspace for businesses and will build on the success of the first phase of the scheme which is occupied by a range of companies related to the offshore/energy sectors.

Segedunum

Work had been completed for a new vision for Segedunum with Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums. This was now being developed into a comprehensive 15 Year Master Plan and investment programme for the site which would underpin future business planning and help grow the visitor offer making it more sustainable.

Charlotte Street

Following the acquisition of 11 residential properties in Charlotte Street, Wallsend, which were in a poor condition and poorly managed would be refurbished and converted from flats to family housing.

New Healthcare Facilities

The Council continued to work with New River Retail and healthcare providers to deliver new healthcare facilities in the heart of Wallsend Town Centre as part of the regeneration of the town centre.

Civic Hall

Work continues with the current operator of Wallsend Civic Hall exploring future opportunities for the wider site.

Former Buddle Arts Centre

Pre-renovation works had been completed for the former Buddle Arts Centre to bring the building back into use as serviced office accommodation and conferencing/events space.

For the North West

Killingworth

A new 3G pitch has been developed at Killingworth Young People's Club which improved the facility for its users.

Killingworth Lake

A major flood alleviation project had been delivered by the Council and the Environment Agency at Killingworth Lake. Further investment was planned to build on the investment in Flood Defences and broaden and expand the area for visitors by further developing facilities including a Multi-Use Games Area, a new café opportunity and a health and fitness trail.

Forest Hall

Forest Hall Shopping Centre was completed last year. Working with the community and businesses, the scheme had transformed the appearance of the centre and had acted as a catalyst for further private sector investment into commercial properties.

Burradon

Improvements were planned to the bowling green, grass pitches and artificial grass mini soccer pitch at Burradon Welfare.

West Moor

Work had been completed to add a new bus lane and improve access for cyclists and pedestrians along Salters' Lane between Haddrick's Mill and West Moor.

Killingworth Moor

Work continued at Killingworth Moor to deliver on the Council's plans for new housing in the borough.

For the North East

Whitley Bay

There had been significant investment at the coast which was encouraging visitors to the area and helping to support the local economy. The Spanish City regeneration and

continued investment in the coastal infrastructure follows the investment in the Central Lower Promenade and the southern portion of the Northern Promenade and Watts Slope WC's.

For the South East

North Shields

Work continued towards the regeneration of North Shields Town Centre and connecting it to the Fish Quay.

The North Shields Master Plan was presented to Cabinet on 3 August 2020. The Master Plan contained a broad range of projects that would develop North Tyneside as a place.

North Tyneside is nothing without its people and it's the businesses and shoppers that make the town centres, bring to life the attractions and visit the parks.

The management of the beaches and open spaces, which during the pandemic, had been more popular than ever. The Council had carried out enforcement to keep residents safe and environment clean and tidy.

Our Economy

The Capacity Fund in response to Covid-19 was launched where funding, which had been secured through the North of Tyne Combined Authority, supported a raft of measures the Council are introducing to support the recovery of the borough and businesses, and ensure the safety of residents.

Manufacturing businesses working on products for the NHS Supply Chain directly linked to Covid-19, which were unable to access NHS Supplier Relief funds, can apply for funding through the new grant scheme.

There is also funded support and consultancy in a range of areas to help businesses during lockdown and into recovery. This included helping identify new markets for existing products, skills or equipment; providing business and financial advice to assist companies to trade out of difficulty; resilience planning to ensure businesses are ready for future disruptions; and ensuring retailers and other businesses are set up to trade online.

In addition, the funding would provide a full range of marketing activities and events to support high street businesses and boost economic growth by encouraging residents to shop locally and attracting new visitors to the borough.

Grants were also be distributed to community groups, particularly important to those who live and work in areas which had suffered most during the Coronavirus crisis.

Housing

The Council had continued to deliver on its promise of accelerating the delivery of affordable homes across the borough. In the last 12 months saw delivery of a further 180 affordable homes. In total, since the launch of the Affordable Homes Programme, nearly 1,600 new affordable homes had been delivered in North Tyneside.

The Elected Mayor thanked the Committee and stated that the Council would not be beaten by the Covid-19 virus, but all Elected Members and staff would work together and offer hope back to our residents and build back better.

Agreed that the Annual Report from the Elected Mayor be noted.

OV70/20 Children and Young People's Plan 2021 - 2025

The Senior Manager – Transformation Health, Education, Care & Safeguarding and Improvement Manager Planning and Business Transformation attended the meeting to present the draft Children and Young People's Plan 2021-2025.

The Plan was developed by the Children and Young People's Partnership, which is part of the North Tyneside Strategic Partnership.

Although many significant achievements had been delivered in recent years, there remained many challenges that the partnership had continued focus.

The draft of the Children and Young People's Plan 2021-25 appended to the report set out the priorities and deliverables that were aligned to the five strategic outcomes based on what children and young people had informed what was important to them, and were:

Outcome 1: I am Safe

Priority 1.1: Ensure children and young people are living safely

Outcome 2: I am Healthy

Priority 2.1: Support children to have a healthy early childhood

Outcome 3: I have Opportunities

Priority 3.1: Narrow the gap in educational outcomes

Priority 3.2: Ensure the right support for children and young people with disabilities and additional needs

Outcome 4: I have a Voice

Priority 4.1: Support children to be active citizens

Outcome 5: I am Happy

Priority 5.1: Develop resilience, confidence and independence in children and young people

The Committee took the opportunity to question officers and raised concerns in relation to:

The 16- and 17-year olds who were Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) it was stated that the effect of Covid would have had an impact on continuity of help for this group. It was stated that it was a concern however the connexions team had a good digital engagement offer that enabled continued contact with individuals and would be considered further.

With children with SEND needs and resources within the borough to accommodate them. It was stated that some children continued to access some educational provision outside the

borough, but it was a focus within the plan. A member asked the number of children receiving out of borough provision. In response it was stated that this information would be provided at the meeting on the 2 February 2021.

A Member requested and it was stated further information to the new Autism Strategy would be provided to the next meeting on 2 February 2021.

Agreed that the draft Children and Young People's Plan 2021-2025.

OV71/20 2021/22 Budget sub-group report

The Committee received the report of the Budget Sub-group that detailed the scrutiny into the Cabinet's initial 2021/25 Financial Planning and Budget proposals.

The group met on 17 December 2020 and 12 January 2021, where officers presented the position of the Authority budget, the Initial budget proposals to deliver a balanced budget.

The Committee was informed that there would be a further meeting of the Budget Sub-group, where it would scrutinise the Cabinets Final Budget Proposals and this would take place on the 2 February 2021. The Committee agreed to delegate the sub-group responsibility to make further comment and any recommendations to Cabinet following this meeting.

There were two themes that the Committee considered needed to be emphasised further, and made recommendations to Cabinet in relation to;

1. The level of strategic reserve where it recommended that the strategic reserve be more widely explained to the public; and
2. A simple graphical representation of the funding received by North Tyneside Council from Central Government be made available to provide a greater understanding to the public.

It was **Agreed** that (1) the Budget Sub-Group report detailing comments be referred to Cabinet; (2) delegate responsibility to the Budget Sub-group to make further comment and any recommendations to Cabinet following scrutiny of Cabinets 2021/22 Final Budget Proposals; and (3) further views and recommendations by Overview, Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee be referred to Cabinet for consideration.