

Cabinet

Monday, 20 September 2021

Present: N Redfearn (Elected Mayor) (in the Chair)
Councillors K Clark, S Cox, P Earley, S Graham,
C Johnson and M Rankin

In Attendance: S McKenzie (Young Mayor),
R Layton (North Tyneside Joint Trades Union Committee)
R Fry (Voluntary and Community Sector)

Apologies: Councillors C Burdis, S Day and A McMullen

CAB35/21 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Councillor K Clark declared a registerable personal interest in agenda Items 7: 2021-2022 Financial Management Report to 31 July 2021 (CAB40/21), and Item 8: 2022-2026 Financial Planning and Budget Process incorporating the Associated Engagement Strategy (CAB41/21), as she was a Director and Employee at Justice Prince CIC which had contracts with North Tyneside Council funded from the Housing Revenue Account (Working Roots).

CAB36/21 Minutes

Resolved that the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 2 August 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

CAB37/21 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:

- Youth Councillors had spent time over the summer working in part time jobs or taking part in National Citizens Service, some had managed to enjoy some family time away and they were all looking forward to the new term and planned to refocus their committees' priorities at their first meetings over the next few weeks.
- Youth Councillors had visited J&B Recycling Centre in Hartlepool and during the October half term they were expecting to visit Suez in Wallsend to learn about the start of the recycling process.
- Youth Councillors had helped create a film which would be used as part of the Elected Member's Anti-Racism Training and were keen to share their lived experience of what it was like in North Tyneside.
- Member of Youth Parliament Abi Tang and Youth Councillor Poppy Chaplin had visited some of the Holiday Activity Fund provision acting as roving reporters and hearing first-hand from the children and young people about their feelings during their activities. Poppy had also visited the Forest School from the Linskill Centre which had taken place

in Northumberland Park and Abi had visited International Food Day at Justice Prince held in the Oxford Centre, as well as Play Day in the Park at the Rising Sun Country Park.

- As part of the Holiday Activity Fund provision Abi and the Young Mayor had set the young people a challenge. Suzie's challenge was Pay It Forward and asked for examples of random acts of kindness, Abi's challenge was North Tyneside Green Fingers looking for examples of activities that young people had completed connected to the environment or fight against climate change, and included prizes for the participants.
- SEND Youth Forum members had looked at interview skills which would help towards creating a fact sheet to support recruitment generally to help young people who were involved in the interview process. They were also working with the Transitions team looking at the information on the Local Offer, checking its accessibility for young people.
- Over the summer some Youth Councillors, SEND Youth Forum and Children in Care Councillors had been involved in interviews for new staff, and had been panel members for the Social Inclusion Manager and the SEND Participation Officer.
- Children in Care Councillor Brandon had visited prospective foster carers to carry out an assessment which involved interviewing them and giving his views.
- The Youth Council Comms group had supported the Clinical Commissioning Group with their Covid vaccine programme by helping with Instagram posts, an expert panel meeting to discuss covid vaccine related questions would be live-streamed on Instagram on 30 September.
- The BAME Committee had announced the launch of an event titled DigitalMe due to take place via Zoom on 21 October 2021 which discusses Refugees and Asylum Seekers bringing people together to view a short, animated film, about refugees and asylum seekers (made by the youth council BAME committee) to encourage empathy, awareness, and action.

The Elected Mayor thanked the Young Mayor for the report and praised the young people for their work. It was agreed that this and future reports would be circulated to all Elected Members to inform them of the positive work carried out by the young people on behalf of the Authority.

CAB38/21 North Tyneside Council Covid-19 Recovery Programme

Cabinet considered a closure report on the Authority's Covid-19 Recovery Programme detailing what had been achieved and how the Programme objectives had been met.

The Authority's Covid-19 Recovery Framework and associated work programme previously agreed by Cabinet had created a structured approach to recovery from the pandemic, with 3 clear phases of: restart; transition and rebuild and grow. The programme had run from June 2020 to July 2021. The Programme had been directed throughout by the Elected Mayor and Cabinet with delivery overseen by an officer level Recovery Coordinating Group (RCG).

All Programme workstreams had been successfully closed with details of achievements and

how the Programme objectives had been met set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

Since the start of the pandemic, 20,509 positive cases of the virus had been detected in North Tyneside; sadly, 481 people in the Borough had died. Local outbreak control arrangements with the NHS and other partners had successfully managed the testing, track and trace and vaccination work for the Borough. North Tyneside had some of the highest compliance rates and take up for testing and vaccination, across the country.

The Authority had ensured support for those residents and authority employees who were classed as clinically extremely vulnerable. Open spaces and areas of natural beauty had continued to be maintained to provide a much needed outlet for maintaining personal wellbeing. Many local businesses had found new and innovative ways to continue trading during the pandemic and had been supported with an extensive range of advice and support from the Authority. Rapid and transformational service changes had taken place and the Authority would seek to keep these as part of its ongoing customer service programme. The Local Government Association had recently described the Authority's response to the pandemic as 'commendable'.

This report signalled the end of the Authority's emergency response to the pandemic. How the Authority and its partners addressed the longer-term effects from the pandemic would be taken forward through a new Our North Tyneside Plan and the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board through a new Health and Wellbeing strategy to tackle health and socio-economic inequalities.

The Authority had consulted with stakeholders throughout and in particular at the end of each phase of the Recovery Programme. Feedback from this engagement had been used to inform and shape the Programme as it progressed.

Work to both commemorate loss and celebrate the response to the pandemic across the Borough would continue as part of the Elected Mayor's Spirit of North Tyneside scheme.

The Elected Mayor thanked everyone involved in the delivery of the Covid-19 Recovery Programme and commented that the spirit of North Tyneside had truly shone through and the collective response had made a real difference to the lives of thousands of people.

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 North Tyneside Council Covid-19 Recovery Programme, End of Programme Report, Appendix 1 be noted; and
(2) the closure of the North Tyneside Council Covid-19 Recovery Programme be approved.

(Reasons for decision: The end of Programme closure report has assessed the delivery of the Programme's objectives and where necessary, confirmed where ongoing support is in place, to ensure change continues to be embedded. The overall performance of the Programme and its management processes have been evaluated and lessons learned compiled, so that they may benefit any post Programme activity or future recovery programmes. Programme information has been reviewed and updated, including risks and finance. The disbanding of the temporary organisation of the Programme is explained in Appendix 1, along with the arrangements for any additional, post Programme activities.)

CAB39/21 Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge Follow Up and Recovery and Renewal Challenge Findings

Cabinet considered a report on the feedback and key reflections from the Local Government Association team following their remote visit in June 2021 to review progress of the six corporate peer challenge recommendations and to carry out a Covid-19 recovery and renewal challenge.

As part of the national sector-led improvement programme, the Authority had taken part in a Local Government Association (LGA) corporate peer challenge from 18 – 21 June 2019. The Peer Team had made six recommendations for the Authority's future planning in a written report.

The feedback and key reflections from the LGA team were extremely positive and supportive of the Authority's plans for the Borough to recover and renew from the challenges faced by the Covid pandemic

The LGA was impressed that the Authority had successfully delivered against the action plan it had produced in response to the six corporate peer review challenge recommendations during the very challenging times caused by the pandemic.

Feedback from the LGA described 'great political and managerial leadership that balances passion and compassion'. The LGA report cited clear evidence of the organisation's values beginning to embed and noted how long standing, positive relationships with many partners, had enabled agile and innovative decision making during the pandemic.

The LGA noted the work to analyse and understand the direct and indirect impacts of the pandemic on local communities and how this would inform a refreshed Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the Borough, through the Health and Well Being Board. The Authority's plans for Covid-19 recovery were found to be impressive, with a clear focus on people and customers.

The following four recommendations had been made by the LGA team, to support the Authority's ongoing work on recovery and renewal:

1. Complete work to strengthen the workforce and organisational development client function.
2. Finalise all strategic plans, with buy-in from all stakeholders.
3. Identify and consider further investment opportunities and integrated pathways with health partners, and
4. Continue to play into the regional and sub-regional space, to bring in tangible benefits to the residents of North Tyneside.

Cabinet considered the following decision options:

Option 1: to note the feedback, key findings and four recommendations from the LGA, as set out in section 1.5.2 of the report and ensure that these are built into the ongoing work to deliver the Our North Tyneside Plan and the Organisational Business Plan.

Option 2: to note the feedback, key findings and four recommendations from the LGA and

not build these into the ongoing work to deliver the Our North Tyneside Plan and the Organisational Business Plan.

Resolved that (1) the LGA feedback and key reflections set out in Appendix 1 to the report be noted; and
(2) the four recommendations from the LGA, as set out in section 1.5.2 of the report, be noted and these be built into the ongoing work to deliver the Our North Tyneside Plan and the Organisational Business Plan.

(Reasons for decision: the recommendations made by the LGA, are based on detailed discussions with the Elected Mayor, Cabinet and the Authority's Chief Executive and senior leadership team during the course of the LGA's remote corporate peer challenge follow up and recovery and renewal remote visit on 29 and 30 June 2021; and the recommendations reflect the feedback and key findings from the LGA.)

CAB40/21 2021/22 Financial Management Report to 31 July 2021

Cabinet considered the second monitoring report outlining the 2021/22 financial position. It provided the latest indication of the potential revenue and capital financial position of the Authority as at 31 March 2022.

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 2021/22 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 £7.420m against the approved net budget. This was made up of a forecasted pressure of £1.813m on normal activities and £5.607m relating to the impact of Covid-19. The pressure on normal activities in the service was driven mainly by Health, Education, Care and Safeguarding at £7.281m, reflecting the continued pressures in Children's Services, 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 £5.720m of pressures in Corporate Parenting and Placements and £1.624m in Integrated Disability and Additional Needs. The drivers for these pressures continued from 2020/21 and 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 £18.420m impact on services were also within Health, Education, Care and Safeguarding where £9.600m was for increased costs to the Authority. Significant Covid-19 related pressures also existed in Environment, Housing and Leisure (£5.608m) and in Commissioning & Asset Management (£2.012m).

Cabinet

The report outlined the revenue grants which had been received during June and July 2021.

There was no further update since the August Cabinet meeting on the school funding position.

The Housing Revenue Account was forecast to have year-end balances at 31 March 2022 of £3.058m, assuming all identified Covid-19 related costs and income shortfalls were covered centrally. The balances were £0.046m higher than budget which had been set at £3.012m, due mainly to the impact of the previous year's financial performance, but there was also an in-year estimated underspend of (£0.010m), against an in-year budget of £1.943m.

Universal Credit had been fully implemented across North Tyneside on 2 May 2018. As of the end of July 2021, 3,484 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 2021-2026 Investment Plan totalled £275.789m (£98.593m 2021/22) and was detailed in the Annex. The Annex also set out the delivery progress to date, planned delivery for 2021/22, reprogramming and other variations identified through the Investment Programme governance process.

An officer led review of the Investment Plan had resulted in proposals for variations of £2.352m and reprogramming of £12.832m and variations of £2.872m of which more details were set out in the Annex to the report. The revised Investment Plan stood at £88.113m for 2021/22 and to the end of July 2021 spend of £12.394m had been incurred which represented 14.07% of the revised plan.

The report also outlined progress against the 2021-2025 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, whilst fluctuating, there was a general trend of a steady increase in numbers LAC levels, 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, Schools' Finance and Housing Revenue Account as at 31 July 2021, as set out in the Annex to the report, be noted;
(2) the receipt of £2.401m new revenue grants be approved;
(3) the Authority's Investment Plan spend of £12.394 to 31 July 2021 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 £2.352m (£2.352m for 2021/22) and reprogramming of £12.832m for 2021-22 within the 2021-2026 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.)

CAB41/21 2022-2026 Financial and Planning and Budget Process incorporating the Associated Engagement Strategy

Cabinet considered a report seeking approval to the proposed 2022-2026 Financial Planning and Budget process including information on the key decision milestones; and as part of the process, the proposed approach to Budget Engagement.

Whilst this report formed an important part of the Authority's budget-setting process for the 2022/23 Budget, it also provided Cabinet with an overview of the potential financial implications of COVID-19, for both the current year and for the period of the Authority's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). An initial review of the MTFS had been carried out in light of future Government announcements and, as the scale of the financial impact of COVID-19 became clear, it would need to be updated.

In addition, the report acknowledged the continuing exceptional circumstances in which the 2022/23 Budget would need to be prepared as the Authority started to emerge from the pandemic. This would have an impact on the organisation's ability to achieve planned Budget savings and income for 2022/23, its capacity to develop and deliver new Budget proposals for 2022/23, and on the wider Budget position, which was the subject of extremely high levels of uncertainty. The report set out details of a proposed Budget planning process for 2022/23 but recognised that there would be a need for flexibility. In this context, the report also provided a summary of key areas of wider risk and uncertainty for Cabinet's consideration.

The last few years had been uncertain and challenging for local government but financial

planning for 2022/23 was particularly difficult. Since March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic had repeatedly highlighted the vital role that the Authority continued to play in supporting vulnerable people and communities across the Borough. This once again demonstrated the critical need to set a balanced and sustainable budget to enable the Authority to continue to deliver the services which were so important for all North Tyneside's residents, businesses and visitors. The report therefore set out the process by which the Authority would build on the 2021/22 budget in order to develop the detailed financial plans for future years, which would secure the Authority's financial position and safeguard the provision of essential services into 2022/23 and beyond.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer had delivered the Spring 2021 Budget on 3 March 2021. As part of the Government's response to COVID-19 there had been 13 major fiscal announcements since the previous Budget on 11 March 2020. This was also the first budget since the UK had entered the various lockdowns imposed in response to COVID-19, and the UK's departure from the European Union.

The Chancellor had confirmed that economic support would be maintained until the country had exited lockdown. This included extensions to furlough, support for the self-employed, support for businesses in the form of business rate relief and targeted grants, and education catch-up funding.

The Government continued to explore the long-term reform of adult social care, the Fair Funding and Business Rates Retention reviews had been pushed back to April 2023 at the earliest, and the future of Government grants such as the Better Care Fund and Troubled Families were also uncertain. The outcome of these had the potential for a significant impact on local government and, in the absence of any announcements, this only added to the challenge.

As in recent years, the Authority would not receive detailed information about funding allocations for 2022/23 until autumn 2021 at the earliest. In the absence of a Comprehensive Spending Review, any long-term funding allocation was unlikely. There was very little time for Government to undertake a full multi-year spending review and in this context a one-year roll over of the local government settlement was increasingly likely for 2022/23.

Beyond the immediate impact of COVID, the overall level of uncertainty meant that the financial environment for local government was set to remain highly challenging. There continued to be a growing gap between funding and service pressures. This was driven by demographic changes, unfunded burdens such as the National Living Wage, and the needs of vulnerable social care users becoming increasingly complex. Children's services, in both social care and education (particularly the High Needs Block), were also under very significant pressure.

Any consideration of the Authority's Medium-Term Financial Strategy and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) must be undertaken in the context of the funding outlook for local government and what that meant for the Authority. Full details of the funding outlook for local government were included in section 3 of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

The current MTFP covered the period to the end of 2024/25. Whilst there continued to be a great deal of financial uncertainty, recommended practice suggested that due consideration

was given not only to the short-term but to how the Authority would continue to finance its activities in the medium-term. It was therefore recommended at this stage that the MTFP covered the four-year period 2022/23 to 2025/26.

The report referred to the Authority's responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty, part of which was to ensure that the potential effects of decisions on those protected by the Equalities legislation were considered prior to any decision being made. The effect of the Authority's budget setting process and decision-making would continually be monitored by using Equality Impact Assessments.

The revised Medium-Term Financial Strategy and the proposed principles for Budget planning for 2022/23, were set out in Appendix A and section 1.5.8 of the report.

Key aspects of the 2021/22 Financial Planning and Budget process timetable were set out at Appendix B to the report. This highlighted key decision milestones in the process.

The Elected Mayor and Cabinet were responsible for formulating the Council Plan and the Authority's Budget. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, in close consultation with the Elected Mayor, had been nominated as the lead Cabinet Member for the overarching 2022-2026 Financial Planning and Budget Process. The Director of Resources would be the project sponsor.

Details of the Budget Engagement Strategy for 2022/2023 were set out at Appendix C to the report. The aim of the Strategy was to reach different sectors of the population through an approach that encompassed engagement with residents as a whole and customers/users of services as well as particular groups of people, including those with protected characteristics. The approach also ensured reach with particular interest groups and also ensured targeted activity with specific external and internal stakeholder groups.

Cabinet considered the following decision option: to agree the recommendations as set out in paragraph 1.2 of the report. The Authority's Constitution and Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules set out the stages to be completed in relation to agreeing the Budget of the Authority. There were no other options available in relation to this. The Budget Engagement Strategy formed part of the 2022-2026 Financial Planning and Budget Process.

Resolved that (1) the revised Medium-Term Financial Strategy and the proposed principles for Budget planning for 2022/23, as set out in Appendix A and section 1.5.8 of the report, be noted;

(2) the proposed outline 2022-2026 Financial Planning and Budget process, which incorporates the key decision milestones and dates, as set out at Appendix B to the report, be approved;

(3) Cabinet recognise that there may be a requirement for flexibility within both the Budget-setting process and the assumptions used, as a result of future Government announcements and other developments relating to COVID-19;

(4) the Budget Engagement Strategy as part of the 2022-2026 Financial Planning and Budget Process, set out at Appendix C to the report, be approved; and

(5) the key Budget risks and uncertainties as set out in the Medium-Term Financial

Strategy, including the implications of announcements made at the Spring Budget 2021 and subsequently as part of the COVID-19 response be noted.

(Reason for decision: The recommendations are mainly legal in nature, as stated in paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2 of the report.)

CAB42/21 Ambition for Education - Update

A report was received which outlined the key strategic challenges currently facing the education system in North Tyneside, the significant work already underway and the further work required to tackle these challenges in partnership with educational leaders.

The Key Strategic Challenges were:

1. Financial sustainability of schools in particular secondary schools
2. Increasing demands in relation to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities
3. Post 16 provision across the borough
4. Impact of Local Plan proposals on school places and review of catchment areas.

The challenges identified above, whilst significant in their own right, were linked and any proposed changes in any one of the parts of the jigsaw could have a consequential impact on the other key areas. Therefore, in taking this work forward it was proposed to establish a core team of officers to progress this work and consider options for change and/or improvements. The work of this team would be overseen by the Education Review Steering Group, chaired by the Cabinet Member for Children Young People & Learning and include Directors and Senior Officers of the Authority as well as other key Stakeholders such as Headteachers and Trade Unions colleagues. Subject to agreement the proposal would be to establish the Team from 1 October 2021 and for the team to be in place for up to two years to support the work required and any proposals and decisions made.

Full detailed analysis of Schools (DSG) finance was set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

Cabinet considered the following decision options: to accept the recommendations set out in paragraph 1.2 of the report; or alternatively, to not accept the recommendations.

Resolved that (1) the key strategic challenges facing the education system and the work done to date be noted;

(2) the following work be progressed in relation to each challenge:

- (a) Financial sustainability of schools in particular secondary provision
In working with both Monkseaton High, Norham and other stakeholders:
 - carry out option appraisals to address the structural deficit issues,
 - enter pre-publication engagement and consultation, and
 - bring forward proposals to achieve educational and financial sustainability at both schools.
- (b) Increasing demand in relation to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and associated resource pressures:
 - progress the work within the eight action plan themes identified within the High

Cabinet

Needs recovery plan

- (c) Post 16 provision across the borough:
- establish a 'post 16 charter and information hub for North Tyneside
 - secure appointment of a dedicated officer post to promote schools and business/industry partnership arrangements
 - strengthen the depth and consistency of careers education across all North Tyneside schools
 - strengthen SEND post 16 pathways across North Tyneside
- (d) Impact of Local Plan proposals on school places and the need to further review catchment areas:
- refresh the Educational Impact Assessment as part of review of Local Plan
 - review assumption made in 2016 against actual pupil numbers as well as forecasting future demands
 - further review catchment area arrangements;
- (3) the establishment of a project team and steering group to support and progress the work required be agreed; and
- (4) further reports be received by Cabinet as required.

(Reason for decision: It reflects the priorities agreed by the Elected Mayor, Cabinet Member, Head Teachers and Chairs of Governing Bodies.)

CAB43/21 Bus Partnership

Cabinet received a report seeking support for the creation by the North East Joint Transport Committee (JTC) of an Enhanced Bus Partnership for the region in accordance with the National Bus Strategy.

Approximately 5.9 million miles of bus journeys in a year were made in North Tyneside, pre-Covid. The Local Plan and the North Tyneside Transport Strategy stated that the Authority would work with partners to maintain and enhance bus provision as part of an integrated public transport network.

The Covid-19 pandemic had had a profound effect on bus travel since March 2020. Reduced bus patronage had meant that, in common with other regions, the North East's bus network was now being heavily supported by Government funding. In its National Bus Strategy, published in March, the Government recognised that the existing model of bus service delivery was not working, and set out a more formal framework for partnership working between authorities and bus operators.

In July, the North East JTC had issued formal notice of its intent to prepare an Enhanced Partnership Plan and Schemes for bus services and had begun working with local bus operators to pursue this. The National Bus Strategy required each area to publish a Bus Service Improvement Plan by the end of October 2021, and to have an Enhanced Partnership with bus operators in place by April 2022, in order to receive any ongoing Government funding.

Transport North East, on behalf of the North East JTC, had carried out public engagement

over the Summer and feedback from this engagement would inform the preparation of the region's Bus Service Improvement Plan. The plan would show how transport bodies and bus operators would work together with local highway authorities, and local communities, to plan and deliver a bus network where buses were better coordinated and easier to understand and use.

The development of the partnership was expected to involve local authorities making certain commitments to support the use of buses: for example, agreeing to deliver bus priority or enforcement measures. Once the Enhanced Partnership was created, such commitments were legally binding on local authorities. The Authority's engagement with Transport North East and bus operators during the development of the Enhanced Partnership would help to ensure that any such commitments reflected North Tyneside's strategies and policies on such matters.

The work initiated by the JTC to develop an Enhanced Partnership therefore represented an opportunity to deliver aspects of the Authority's, and the region's, transport objectives – and to secure ongoing Government funding for bus services.

Cabinet considered the following decision options: to accept the recommendations set out in paragraph 1.2 of the report; or alternatively, to not accept the recommendations.

Resolved that (1) the creation by the North East Joint Transport Committee of an Enhanced Bus Partnership for the region in accordance with the National Bus Strategy be approved; and
(2) further reports be submitted to Cabinet on the progressive development of the Enhanced Bus Partnership and its implications for North Tyneside.

(Reason for decision: To clearly indicate the Authority's support for the development of an Enhanced Partnership, which represents an opportunity to deliver aspects of the Authority's and the region's transport objectives and to secure ongoing Government funding for bus services.)

CAB44/21 North Tyneside Tenancy Strategy 2021-2025

Cabinet considered a report on the outcome of a consultation exercise on a revised Tenancy Strategy for North Tyneside and to seek approval for a Tenancy Strategy 2021-2025.

As agreed at the Cabinet meeting on 25 January 2021 the consultation had been extended to seek the views of all residents of the borough.

The consultation had been carried out over a 6-week period between 10 May 2021 – 20 June 2021 and had been widely promoted. Details of the questions and responses to the survey were set out in the report. No responses had been received from any registered provider tenants, private rented tenants, or leaseholder tenants. In total 25 responses had been received to the consultation and no concerns were highlighted that required amendments to the draft strategy.

The key issues raised from the consultation were in relation to the terminology of the strategy - *"Need to explain in layman's terms not in legal jargon"*. However, due to the

Cabinet

nature of the document the terminology was a requirement for a legislative document.

Details of the outcomes and response to the strategy consultation were set out in Appendix 3 to the report.

Cabinet considered the following decision options:

Option 1: to acknowledge the consultation exercise results and approve the draft Tenancy Strategy 2021 – 2025.

Option 2: to reject the strategy; however, the Authority could be at risk of failing to meet its duty in formulating and publishing a Tenancy Strategy, that was kept under review and amended or replaced from time to time.

Option 3: to request further information prior to approval of the Tenancy Strategy 2021 - 2025.

Resolved that (1) the consultation exercise responses, at Appendix 3 of the report, be noted; and
(2) the Tenancy Strategy 2021 – 2025, at Appendix 1 of the report, be approved.

(Reasons for decision: It is a statutory requirement that local authorities publish a Tenancy Strategy. This strategy provides guidance to registered providers of social housing in North Tyneside on the Authority's preferred approach to tenancies.

When amending or replacing the strategy, the Authority must consult with registered providers of social housing who operate in the Borough. The Authority extended this to residents of North Tyneside to capture those who may already be a social housing tenant or who may become a social housing tenant in the future.

The feedback received following the consultation with the wider audience did not highlight any concerns that required changes needed within the draft strategy.)

CAB45/21 Complaints Service Report 2020-21

Cabinet considered a report which detailed complaint related activity during 2020-21 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 2020-21 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

Cabinet

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 2020-21, 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 2020-21 was detailed in the report at Appendix 2.

The Authority's complaints service report for 2020-21 at Appendix 1 showed that the overall number of formal complaints had remained static in comparison to 2019-20 (1,070 complaints and 1,069 complaints respectively).

There had been 967 Corporate Complaints received during 2019-20, the figure during 2020-21 was 451, it was noted that the registering of complaints had been placed on hold in line with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's recommendations during April – June 2020 due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The Authority recognised that it was important to deal with complaints well as this was central to providing a good customer service. Services sought to address complaints and learn from these complaints so that the Authority could continually improve services. The results were set out in detail in the report at Appendix 1.

The number of social care complaints (relating to both Adult Social Care and Children and Young People's Services) was 102 in 2019-20 and 68 in 2020-21. This equated to 30 cases in Children's Social Services and 38 cases in Adult Social Care. A breakdown of the numbers and categories of complaints was provided in the report.

The Authority had established 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, amongst other things, 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 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 connected with the Better Never Stops programme. There had been several changes to procedures

Cabinet

and practice during 2020-21 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 2020-21, as set out in the Annual Complaints Report (Appendix 1), be noted; (2) the Report be approved for publication by the Director of Law and Governance; and (3) the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Annual Review of complaints concerning North Tyneside Council for 2020-21 (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.)

CAB46/21 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.

CAB47/21 Havelock Place Extra Care Scheme, Backworth

Cabinet considered a report seeking approval for the Authority to utilise its registered provider status to support the opening of a new extra care scheme at Havelock Place, Backworth.

The scheme at Backworth would specifically support people with dementia and would be the first dementia specific and dementia friendly extra care scheme in North Tyneside.

The report outlined the proposed lease arrangements and terms of a management agreement with Everyday Homes Limited.

Cabinet considered the following decision options: to accept the recommendations set out in paragraph 1.2 of the report; or alternatively, to not accept the recommendations and leave it to Age UK North and Northumberland Estates to resolve an alternative solution.

Resolved that (1) proposals to secure the opening of Havelock Place, a new dementia focused extra care scheme in Backworth, be approved;

(2) the Director of Law and Governance in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources and the Director of Resources, be authorised to negotiate and complete a lease with and management agreement with Everyday Homes and Everyday Care to secure the provision of the extra care scheme from October / November 2021 at the earliest and subject to agreement on the sub-lease and management agreement to appropriately referred individuals as set out in paragraph 1.5.6 of the report; and

(3) it be noted that this decision is dependent upon the completion of a satisfactory lease and management agreement which manages risk for the Authority, as described in the report.

(Reasons for decision: to ensure the delivery of the extra care scheme at Havelock Place, Backworth; supports maximising and maintaining the independence of people with a dementia and avoids / delays the need for admission into a care home; and meets the eligible needs and is in line with Adult Social Care commissioning intentions, and the Housing Market Position Statement for vulnerable adults.)

CAB48/21 Date and Time of Next Meeting

6.00pm on Monday 18 October 2021.

Minutes published on 24 September 2021.

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 Friday 1 October 2021.