

## **CABINET**

Tuesday, 13 December 2022

**PRESENT** – Councillors Dulston (Chair), Clarke, Durham, Keir, K Nicholson, Renton and Tostevin

**INVITEES** – Councillors Curry, Harker and Snedker

**APOLOGIES** – Councillor Bartch

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE** – Councillors Mrs Culley, Mrs H Scott and Wallis

### **C231 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.**

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

### **C232 TO HEAR RELEVANT REPRESENTATION (FROM MEMBERS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC) ON ITEMS ON THIS CABINET AGENDA.**

In respect of Minute C233 below, representations were made by members of the public in attendance at the meeting and in writing.

### **C233 SKERNINGHAM GARDEN VILLAGE DESIGN CODE**

The Leader introduced the report of the Chief Executive (previously circulated) updating Members on the progress of Skerningham Garden Village Design Code Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and requesting that consideration be given to commencing an additional round of public consultation on the Skerningham Garden Village Design Code Draft SPD (also previously circulated).

The submitted report stated that it was a requirement of the adopted Darlington Local Plan 2016/36 to create and adopt SPD's based on a Design Code for Skerningham Garden Village; the Skerningham Garden Village Design Code Draft SPD had been formally consulted upon between 9 September and 17 October 2022; 87 comments from 75 contributing consultees had been received; given those extensive comments and observations it was requested that a refreshed document which demonstrated positively the differences that had been proposed in the Skerningham Garden Village Design Code be consulted up; and that DesignNE had carried out the refresh of the Design Code.

A number of questions were raised by members of the public on a number of issues including how the Council would address the biodiversity loss without resorting to 'net gain' scenarios; the timing of the public consultation over the Christmas and New Year period when the vast majority of people may not have the time to respond to the consultation; the reasoning for removing some of the principles from the Design Code; the route of the access road through the Skerningham plantation; and whether the Council had the exact location of the burial sites. Particular references were also made to the suitability of the site for housing; the demand for housing; the capacity of the A1150 to deal with the extra traffic generated by the development; and to the replacement of any trees that were lost as a result of the development. The Leader, Chief Executive and Assistant Director Economic Growth

responded thereon.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the progress and content of the Skerningham Garden Village Design Code Supplementary Planning Documents, as detailed in the submitted report, be noted.

(b) That the additional public consultation period on the revised Skerningham Garden Village Design Code Draft Supplementary Planning Document, from 9 December 2022 to 6 January 2023, be approved.

**REASON** - To ensure the various stakeholders are fully aware of the contents of the refreshed document and demonstrate that the Council has engaged positively with the residents and consultees.

## **C234 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN - INVESTING IN AND DELIVERING SUCCESS FOR DARLINGTON**

The Leader introduced the report of the Chief Officers Executive (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2023/24 to 2026/27 (also previously circulated) for consultation, including setting a budget and council tax increase for 2023/24.

The submitted report stated that the current economic climate presented significant challenges to the Council's budgets; rising inflation, interest rates and energy costs and post-Covid demand in social care were putting significant pressures on the Council's finances; and that unless further government funding was forthcoming the Council would need to undertake a fundamental review of its services over the course of 2023 to decide what and how services would be delivered in the coming years.

Reference was made to the fact that the Local Government Finance Settlement was not anticipated until the week commencing 19 December, the consequence of which was that the draft 2023/24 Budget and MTFP had an eye to future years but did not seek to presume what the future would look like.

It was reported that the Council would set a legal budget in 2023/24 and continue to provide the core offer level of services to the residents of Darlington; it would deliver a balanced position until 2024/25 utilising reserves as per the financial strategy; there was an annual budget deficit which was not sustainable and would need to be addressed; unless further funding was forthcoming the Council would need to both reduce expenditure and increase income to ensure a stable position moving forward; planning beyond the current year was extremely difficult, given the uncertainty around future funding; and that current planning suggested that reserves would be depleted in 2025/26 and there would be a budget deficit of approximately £10M.

Details of the projected expenditure and income, budget pressures and savings, schedule of fees and charges, assumptions used to prepare estimates, projected Revenue Outturn 2022/23 and proposed Capital Programme, were also appended to the submitted report.

Discussion ensued on the percentage of the budget spent on social care; to the high percentage of staffing costs and the implications of implementing the living wage; the

implications on the rise in Council Tax on those families who were already struggling; and to the way that the Council received funding from the government. The Leader and Group Director of Operations responded thereon.

**RESOLVED** - That the Revenue Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and the Capital Programme, as set out in Appendices 6 and 7 respectively of the submitted report, be approved for consultation, including:-

- (a) a Council tax increase of 2.99 per cent plus a two per cent Adult Social Care Precept to fund social care for 2023/24; and
- (b) the Schedule of Charges, as set out in Appendix 3 of the submitted report.

**REASONS** - (a) The Council must set a budget for the next financial year.

- (b) To enable the Council to continue to plan services and finances over the medium term.
- (c) To ensure decisions can be made in a timely manner.
- (d) To ensure investment in the Council's assets is maintained.

**DECISIONS DATED –  
FRIDAY 16 SEPTEMBER 2022**