

**DECISIONS SHOULD NOT BE IMPLEMENTED BEFORE
MONDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2024**

CABINET

Tuesday, 5 November 2024

PRESENT – Councillors Harker (Chair), Curry, McCollom, McEwan, Porter and Roche

INVITEES – Councillors Dulston, K Nicholson and Snedker

APOLOGIES – Councillors Dr. Riley and Wallis

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillors Baker, Dillon, Mrs Culley and Garner

C58 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

**C59 TO HEAR RELEVANT REPRESENTATION (FROM MEMBERS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC) ON
ITEMS ON THIS CABINET AGENDA.**

No representations were made by Members or members of the public in attendance at the meeting.

C60 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS CABINET HELD ON 8 OCTOBER 2024.

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this held on 8 October 2024.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes be confirmed as a correct record.

REASON – They represent an accurate record of the meeting.

C61 MATTERS REFERRED TO CABINET

There were no matters referred back for re-consideration to this meeting.

C62 ISSUES ARISING FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no issues arising from Scrutiny considered at this meeting.

C63 KEY DECISION - PROCUREMENT PLAN UPDATE

Pursuant to Minute C124/Apr/24, the Cabinet Member with the Resources Portfolio introduced the report (previously circulated) of the Executive Director - Resources and Governance requesting that consideration be given to the update to the Annual Procurement Plan (also previously circulated); the assessment of contracts that are considered to be strategic or non-strategic; updating Members on the outcomes of procurement(s) previously

designated as strategic; the decisions taken by the Procurement Board to waive the Contract Procedure Rules; Social Value; and the Procurement Act 2023 and its implementation.

The submitted report stated that any contract award decision with a value below £100,000 was delegated to officers; the annual Procurement Plan detailed all the existing and new contracts that were over £100,000 which required a tender process; that for those contracts which were over £100,000 and considered strategic, the final contract award decision would be approved by the Procurement Board and reported to Cabinet; and that one further contract had been designated as strategic and included in the update to the annual plan.

Particular references were made to the planned implementation date of the Procurement Act 2023, which had been put back to the 24 February 2025 to allow time to produce a new National Policy Statement (NPPS) and to the work that had been undertaken to date, to prepare for its implementation.

RESOLVED – (a) That the assessment of strategic and non-strategic contracts as presented in the plan at Appendix 1 to the submitted report, be approved, and it be agreed that:

- (i) further reports/ updates on the procurement process for those contracts designated as strategic (including decisions made by the Procurement Board) be brought to Cabinet;
- (ii) the contract award decisions for the contracts designated as non-strategic be delegated to the appropriate Directorate as listed in the plan at Appendix 1 to the submitted report; and
- (iii) the contract award decisions for the contracts designated as strategic, as listed in the plan at Appendix 1 to the submitted report, be delegated to the Procurement Board to approve and be reported back to Cabinet.

(b) That the update in respect of strategic procurements, Procurement Board waiver decisions, and Social Value, as detailed in the submitted report, be noted.

REASONS - (a) In respect of strategic / non-strategic contracts:-

- (i) the Contract Procedure Rules require Cabinet to approve the designation of contracts as strategic and non-strategic;
- (ii) contracts designated strategic are of high value and high significance in respect of the impact on residents, Health and Safety, and public safety; and
- (iii) the contracts designated non-strategic are of a lower value and lower significance in respect of the impact on residents and public safety.

(b) In respect of Procurement Board waiver decisions :-

- (i) in order to comply with the Contract Procedure Rules;
- (ii) to provide Cabinet with information about the decisions made by the Procurement Board; and
- (iii) to supplement the reports that are taken to Cabinet about proposed spend over £100,000, that are set out in the Annual Procurement Plan and the in-year update to that report.

C64 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PLAN 2024/27

The Leader of the Council introduced the report (previously circulated) of the Executive Director - People, providing Members with an update on the development and planned implementation of the Children and Young People Plan (CYPP) 2024/27.

The submitted report stated that the Children Act (2004) introduced powers for the Secretary of State to require local authorities to produce plans to show how partner agencies, with a duty to co-operate under the Act, were discharging their duties in respect of children's services; although there was no longer a requirement to produce a CYPP, it was considered good practice to still produce a strategic document across partners, as there was still a statutory duty on partner agencies to co-operate to support and safeguard children; and that the draft plan supported the vision and sought to contribute to the ambitions of the Council Plan, the overarching strategic plan for Darlington until 2027.

It was reported that the CYPP was one of the identified delivery plans within the Council Plan; it identified the key actions that would be taken to deliver the agreed priorities for children; the CYPP was a partnership plan which showed how organisations and agencies would work together to improve outcomes for children and young people in Darlington; and that a multi-agency Steering Group had been in operation since 2017 which would be responsible for implementing the CYPP over the next three years.

RESOLVED – (a) That the content of the Children and Young People Plan 2024/27, as detailed in the submitted report, be noted.

(b) That the recommended next steps for the Children and Young People Plan 2024/27, as detailed in the submitted report, be agreed.

REASON – To enable the Children and Young People Plan 2024/27 to be implemented.

C65 (URGENT ITEM) HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND

The Leader of the Council introduced the report (previously circulated) of the Chief Executive requesting that consideration be given to a programme of support to deliver the fifth extension of the Government funded Household Support Fund (HSF) for the period 1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025.

The submitted report stated that as part of a number of measures to provide help with global inflationary challenges and the significantly rising cost of living, the Household Support Fund (HSF) would be extended from 1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025; the objective of the fund was to provide crisis support to vulnerable households in most need of support; Darlington's allocation was £913,853.75, which was the same level as the last extension; as the current programme was being delivered effectively, meeting spend and output targets it was proposed that the new programme would take forward most elements of that programme; and that a programme aimed at maximising household incomes would also be included using the Low Income Family Tracker targeting groups identified as requiring particular attention.

It was reported that as the submission date for the delivery plan to be submitted to the DWP

was 1 November 2024, and that a submission had been made on the basis of the submitted report, with any amendments required following Cabinet's consideration to be made subsequently.

Particular references were made at the meeting to the poverty levels in Darlington; the need for the fund to help those people that were struggling; the cut to winter fuel payments to pensioners; the pension credits that weren't currently being claimed by pensioners in Darlington; and the alternatives available to the government to fund the deficit. The Leader of the Council responded thereon.

RESOLVED – (a) That the proposed programme and estimated costings of the Household Support Fund, as detailed in the submitted report, be approved.

(b) That delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive, in conjunction with the Cabinet Member with the Stronger Communities Portfolio, to amend funding pots as necessary, to ensure full utilisation of the grant within the time period.

(c) That it be noted that no revisions were made to the submission.

REASONS - (a) To address the criteria laid down in the guidance.

(b) In order to secure the grant funding.

C66 HOUSING SERVICES TENANT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY 2024/29

The Cabinet Member with the Health and Housing Portfolio introduced the report (previously circulated) of the Executive Director – Resources and Governance requesting that consideration be given to the Housing Services Tenant Involvement Strategy 2024/29 (also previously circulated).

The submitted report stated that the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) set a number of consumer standards, which applied to all social housing providers, specifically in relation to transparency, influence and accountability; the Council had well established processes in place to involve and engage with its tenants; and that the Housing Services Tenant Involvement Strategy 2024/29 promoted the Council's continued commitment to tenant involvement. The areas covered in the strategy included providing the right information; supporting tenants to make their voice heard; making decisions with tenants; and maximising scrutiny and accountability.

It was reported that the Tenants Panel and the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee had considered and supported the strategy.

RESOLVED – (a) That the report be noted.

(b) That the Housing Services Tenant Involvement Strategy 2024/29, as detailed at Appendix 1 of the submitted report, be approved.

REASONS – (a) The Council values the support and involvement its tenants provide about the services they receive. The Council's tenants are best placed to let the Council know how

to make improvements and to review its plans and proposals for the future.

(b) The RSH's Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard sets outcomes for social housing providers about the way they engage and involve their tenants. The adoption of a formal tenant involvement strategy is one of the ways to demonstrate how the Council will achieve this.

C67 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT - SCHEME APPROVAL 2025/26

The Cabinet Member with the Resources Portfolio introduced the report (previously circulated) of the Executive Director - Resources and Governance requesting that consideration be given to the draft Council Tax Support (CTS) Scheme (also previously circulated) for 2025/26 prior to approval by Council on 28 November 2024.

The submitted report stated that the previous scheme had become operational on 1 April 2024; Councils were required to set a CTS scheme each year and as part of that exercise were required to consider whether any changes should be made to the existing scheme, and where changes were made, consider what transitional protection, if any, should be applied to anyone affected by those changes; and that no significant changes were proposed to the existing scheme.

It was reported that the scheme had been considered by the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 31 October 2024, who agreed its onward submission to Cabinet for consideration.

RESOLVED – That draft Council Tax Support Scheme 2025/26, as detailed at Appendix 1 to the submitted report, be endorsed and forwarded to Council for approval.

REASONS – (a) The Council is required to publish a local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2025/26 by 11 March 2025.

(b) The Council Tax Schemes since 2013 have all been implemented successfully without any major challenges.

(c) The continued application of a reduced entitlement for working aged people is still appropriate, given the current financial position of the Council.

C68 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2024/25 - QUARTER 2

The Cabinet Member with the Resources Portfolio introduced the report (previously circulated) of the Executive Director - Resources and Governance providing a forecast of the 2024/25 revenue budget outturn as part of the Council's continuous financial management process.

The submitted report stated that it was the second revenue budget management report to Cabinet for 2024/25 and that the latest projections showed an overall decline of £1.364m on the 2024/28 Medium Term Financial Plan, which was due to £2.519m of departmental pressures and a decline in corporate reserves of £0.166m, offset by £1.321m of additional balances following the 2023/24 outturn.

RESOLVED - (a) That the forecast revenue outturn for 2024/25, as detailed in the submitted report, be noted.

(b) That further regular reports be made to monitor progress and take prompt action if necessary.

REASONS - (a) To continue effective management of resources.

(b) To continue to deliver services to agreed levels.

C69 PROJECT POSITION STATEMENT AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING - QUARTER 2 - 2024/25

The Cabinet Member with the Resources Portfolio introduced the report (previously circulated) of the Executive Director – Environment, Highways and Community Services and the Executive Director – Resources and Governance providing the latest Capital resource and commitment position, to inform monitoring of the affordability and funding of the Council’s capital programme; an update on the current status of all construction projects currently being undertaken by the Council; and requesting that consideration be given to a number of changes to that programme.

The submitted report stated that the projected outturn of the current capital programme was £331.717m against an approved programme of £332.202m; the investment was delivering a wide range of improvements to the Council’s assets and services; the programme, including commitments, remained affordable within the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2024/25 to 2027/28; the Council was managing 26 live projects, with an overall projected outturn value of £157.489m, the majority of which were running to time, cost and quality expectations, but were being monitored given the current pressures on resources in the construction sector nationally; and that the projects were managed either by the Council’s in-house management team, a Framework Partner or by Consultants sourced via an open/OJEU tender process.

RESOLVED - (a) That the status position on construction projects, as detailed in the submitted report, be noted.

(b) That the projected capital expenditure and resources, as detailed in the submitted report, be noted.

(c) That the adjustments to resources, as detailed in paragraph 21 of the submitted report, be approved.

REASONS - (a) To inform Cabinet of the current status of construction projects.

(b) To make Cabinet aware of the latest financial position of the Council.

(c) To maintain effective management of resources

C70 MEMBERSHIP CHANGES - TO CONSIDER ANY MEMBERSHIP CHANGES TO OTHER BODIES TO

WHICH CABINET APPOINTS.

There were no membership changes reported at the meeting.

**DECISIONS DATED –
FRIDAY 8 NOVEMBER 2024**