

CABINET MEETING – 20 JUNE 2024
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I

Title of Report:

MINUTES, PART I

Author(s):

Assistant Director of Law and Governance

Purpose of Report:

Presents the minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2024, Part I.

Action Required:

To confirm the minutes as a correct record.

Meeting of the **CABINET** held in **CITY HALL (COUNCIL CHAMBER)** on **THURSDAY 14 MARCH 2024** at **10.00am**

Present: -

Councillor G Miller in the Chair

Councillors Chequer, Johnston, Price, Rowntree, Stewart and Williams.

Also present: -

Councillors F Miller, Scott, A Smith and P Walker – Deputy Cabinet Members
Councillor Edgeworth

Part I

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 31 January 2024, Part I (copy circulated) were submitted.

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 31 January 2024, Part I, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest

The following declarations were made: -

Agenda Item 12 – Swimming Pool Support Fund – Phase 1 Revenue: Hetton Community Pool and Wellness Centre	Councillor Johnston declared an interest as an employee of SLM, Councillor Chequer declared an interest as her partner is an employee of SLM and Councillor Price and the Executive Director of Health, Housing and Communities declared interests as Board Members of Sunderland Lifestyle Partnership Ltd. All of the above mentioned individuals left the room during consideration of the item.
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Agenda Item 15 – Sunderland Business Improvement District (BID) Operating Agreement	Councillors G Miller and Rowntree declared interests as Directors of the BID and left the room during consideration of the item.
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Agenda Item 22 – School Admission Arrangements for the 2025/2026 Academic Year	Councillor Williams declared an interest as the Chair of the Governing Body of Oxclose Community Academy and the left the room during consideration of the item.
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Agenda Item 27 – 2024
Siglion Business Plan

Councillors G Miller and Rowntree declared interests as Siglion Board Members and left the room during consideration of the item.

Agenda Item 28 – Disposal
of Industrial Property in
Washington and Related
Matters

Councillors G Miller and Rowntree declared interests as Members of the IAMP Board.

Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

Honorary Freedom of the City of Sunderland

The Chief Executive submitted a report which asked the Cabinet to consider recommending to Council that the Honorary Freedom of the City of Sunderland be conferred upon:

- Kevin Ball - In recognition of the example of commitment and achievement he sets in sport and football, as an ambassador for Sunderland and a role model for young people in the city; and also to
- Gerard (Ger) Fowler- In recognition of the example of commitment and achievement he sets in supporting the city's veteran community, as an ambassador for Sunderland and a role model for young people in the city.

The Leader reminded Cabinet Members that the Council had traditionally honoured those people who had made significant, positive contributions to the reputation and wellbeing of the city and its residents by conferring upon them the Honorary Freedom of the City.

The Leader highlighted that the city's footballing legends held an incredibly special place in the hearts of the people of Sunderland and similarly, Sunderland had a reputation for being a very welcoming, caring and inclusive place with a strong sense of community spirit, with groups and individuals working tirelessly across the voluntary and community sector to help, support, guide, advise and provide opportunities for the city's residents.

It was therefore proposed to nominate the two, aforementioned, highly valued and respected figures in these fields, for consideration to receive the Honorary Freedom of the City.

Kevin and Ger's profiles were set out in the report and the proposal would formally recognise their achievements and contributions to the city, along with the respect which the people of Sunderland hold for them.

Accordingly it was: -

2. RESOLVED to recommend to Council that

- (i) in accordance with the provisions of Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972

Kevin Ball; and
Gerard (Ger) Fowler

as persons of distinction who have, in the opinion of the Council, rendered eminent services to the city, be admitted as Honorary Freemen of the City; and

- (ii) authority be given for the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to agree all appropriate arrangements for the formal ceremony at an extraordinary meeting of the Council to be held at the earliest opportunity.

Appointment of Honorary Alderman and Honorary Alderwoman of the City of Sunderland

The Chief Executive submitted a report which asked the Cabinet to consider recommending to Council the appointment of two former councillors to be Honorary Alderman and Alderwoman of the City of Sunderland.

In accordance with the agreed arrangements in the scheme for the appointment of Honorary Aldermen, the following former Councillors had been nominated in recognition of their eminent service to the Council and to the people of the City of Sunderland; Mr Peter Wood; and Mrs Louise Farthing.

The Leader highlighted that the Council had the opportunity to honour and celebrate the achievements of past councillors for their services. The profile of both councillors was outlined in the report and the appointments to the position of Honorary Alderman or Alderwoman were a fitting way to formally recognise the distinguished service of former councillors, both to the Council and to the City of Sunderland.

Councillor Edgeworth asked if the role of Honorary Alderman would be open to any councillor after they retired and the Leader advised that the conferment of Honorary Alderman status was in relation to the service an individual had given to the city and their time in the role.

It was therefore: -

3. RESOLVED that it be recommended to Council that: -

- (i) in accordance with the provisions of Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council do confer the titles of Honorary Alderman and Honorary Alderwoman of the City, on former councillors

Mr Peter Wood and Mrs Louise Farthing, in recognition of their eminent service to the Council and the people of the City of Sunderland; and

- (ii) authority be given for the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to agree all appropriate arrangements for the formal ceremony at an extraordinary meeting of the Council to be held at the earliest opportunity.

Independent Remuneration Panel and Members' Allowances Scheme 2024/2025

The Director of Finance and the Assistant Director of Law and Governance submitted a joint report presenting the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel in respect of the Allowances Scheme for 2024/2025.

Councillor Stewart reported that three new members had recently been recruited to the pool from which the panels were convened and in the circumstances, in order to enable the new members to become familiar with the arrangements and roles and responsibilities at the Council, the Panel had recommended that the terms of the Scheme for 2024/2025 should remain unchanged, and that a detailed review should be undertaken during the course of the year.

4. RESOLVED that Cabinet recommend Council to accept the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel to continue to apply the terms of the current scheme in respect of the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2024/2025.

Council Tax Premiums and Discounts

The Director of Finance submitted a report advising Cabinet of the legislative changes relating to the Empty Homes Premium and Second Homes Premium provided for in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 and proposed changes to council tax discounts.

Councillor Stewart reported that on 26 October 2023 the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill received Royal Assent and became the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023. The Act enabled a council tax premium of 100% to be charged against dwellings that are known as "second homes" and also reduced the time period before a 'long term empty dwelling' could be charged the 100 percent premium to one year.

The Council had previously implemented the premiums applicable to empty homes consistent with the legislation. Applying these measures in line with new national legislation would assist with encouraging empty homes to be brought back into use and increase the income raised through council tax. These premiums would be effective from April 2025.

It was also proposed that the Council reviewed council tax Class C discounts which apply to properties which were unoccupied and substantially unfurnished and council tax Class D discounts which applied to dwellings that were unoccupied and substantially unfurnished where major repair work or structural alterations were being undertaken. It was proposed to consult upon the removal of these discounts with the outcome considered by Cabinet as part of its determination of the council tax base in January 2025.

5. RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the reduction in the amount of time a property needs to be classed as empty and unfurnished before a 100% Council Tax premium is applied from the current two years to twelve months from 1 April 2025 be approved;
- (ii) it be agreed to introduce a 100% Council Tax premium for those properties classed as a 'second home' from 1 April 2025; and
- (iii) the Director of Finance be authorised to consult on proposed changes to the award of council tax discounts as detailed in section 4 of the report.

Homeless Support Hub

The Executive Director of Health, Housing and Communities submitted a report seeking approval to award grant funding to the Salvation Army to facilitate the creation of a multi service support homeless hub and service centre.

Councillor Johnston advised that it had been identified that this type of service provision provided a valuable service in response to those homeless and sleeping rough and the Homelessness Health Needs Assessment identified that a homeless drop in was a key point of service access and support for those who were homeless and was highlighted to support their health and wellbeing

There was an opportunity to work with the Salvation Army within their existing building at Swan Lodge to create this new homeless facility and develop long term homeless support and multi service delivery and partnerships.

This delivery of a Homeless Support Hub approach aligned with the Council's Homelessness Reduction and Sleeping Rough Strategy 2023 – 2028 and the associated Action Plan which outlined the need to have comprehensive response and support for those people sleeping rough, homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The Homeless Support Hub also had alignment with wider health strategies, priorities and the objectives of Sunderland's City Plan and this proposed Homeless Support Hub would be a valuable access and support point for those who were homeless and sleeping rough.

Councillor Chequer welcomed the report as Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Drug and Alcohol Multi-Agency Partnership. Those who were homeless and sleeping rough were some of the most vulnerable and experiencing health inequalities and it was good to see this recognised.

Councillor Williams emphasised the importance of partnership working and that homelessness was not just the result of one circumstance and was not a simplistic situation. Councillor F Miller added that it was important that drug and alcohol issues were targeted in the correct settings by the correct people.

Following consideration of the report it was: -

6. RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the development of a joint working partnership with the Salvation Army in creation of a new homeless support hub be approved; and
- (ii) the award of grant funding to the Salvation Army from the approved Inspiring Future capital programme to enable the development of a new city multi-service support homeless hub be approved in principle and actual costs be reported to a future Cabinet meeting for consideration.

Homes England Compliance Audit Report 2023 – 2024 – Provider’s Acknowledgement of Report

The Executive Director of Health, Housing and Communities submitted a report seeking formal acknowledgement of the Homes England Compliance Report 2023-24 which was in line with Homes England requirements.

Councillor Johnston explained that Homes England required that the contents of the Homes England Compliance Audit Report 2023-24 including all recommendations must be acknowledged by the Housing Provider Board’s Chair or equivalent and for the Council this would be Cabinet.

The purpose of a Homes England Compliance Audit was to confirm that grant recipients had met all of Homes England’s funding conditions and contractual requirements and had properly exercised their responsibilities as set out in the Capital Funding Guide. Homes England use the audit findings to inform their future investment decisions and to reassure the Homes England Chief Accounting Officer that public funds had been properly used.

The recent audit reviewed three schemes which were delivered through the Council’s Purchase and Repair Programme which brings empty properties back into use. The Homes England Compliance Report 2023-24 which showed that zero breaches were identified, and that the Council had been graded as “Green - Meets requirements”, was attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

Accordingly, it was: -

7. RESOLVED that the Homes England Compliance Audit Report 2023-2024 and any recommendations contained within it be formally acknowledged.

Local Welfare Provision Scheme and Discretionary Housing Payment Scheme Policy Updates

The Executive Director of Health, Housing and Communities submitted a report which set out two revised policies on the Council's Discretionary Financial Support Scheme to enable their implementation from April 2024.

Councillor Price advised that both the Local Welfare Provision Scheme and the Discretionary Housing Payment Scheme provided support to vulnerable customers with low incomes, who were receiving means-tested benefits and who were struggling with crisis and emergency situations.

It was the intention that this support continued and was still prioritised towards those that were most in need. Cabinet Members were informed that there was now a need to update both policies. The focus on the proposed policies was to firm up the criteria, make the obligations for applicants clearer and to confirm the extent of available support as it was likely that support for most cases would be more limited in the future.

Councillor Williams welcomed the report and was pleased to see the revised policies being brought to Cabinet but was disappointed that the Government had only extended the scheme by six months in the Budget announcement when there was a need to plan way beyond a six-month period.

Having considered the report, it was: -

8. RESOLVED that: -
 - (i) the revised Local Welfare Provision Scheme Policy be approved;
 - (ii) the revised Discretionary Housing Payments Scheme Policy be approved; and
 - (iii) responsibility for the ongoing administration and routine review of the Discretionary Financial Support Schemes including updating associated Operational Guidance be delegated to the Executive Director of Health, Housing and Communities in consultation with the Vibrant City Portfolio Holder.

PlayZones

The Executive Director of Health, Housing and Communities submitted a report advising Cabinet of an external funding opportunity to develop new sport and physical activity facilities across the city and seeking approval (subject to successful funding application) for the procurement, and award of all contracts necessary to deliver the project.

Councillor Price reported that the development of PlayZones would continue to support the ambition of the City Council's Active Sunderland Service area to enable and facilitate opportunities for everyone to be as physically active as they could be.

PlayZones were described by the Football Foundation as safe, inclusive, and accessible outdoor facilities which would bring communities together to be active through recreational football and a range of other sports and activities. The programme aimed to engage with local communities, to create modern activity spaces and help tackle inequalities in disadvantaged communities

If all of the funding bids to develop five PlayZones were successful, then the procurement works would be in excess of £500,000 and therefore would require Cabinet approval.

Councillor Chequer said that she wholeheartedly welcomed such an ambitious project and the ambition to tackle inequalities in sport. There was a lot of technical work going into identifying sites and she was pleased to see this citywide project encouraging community benefits.

9. RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the Executive Director of Health, Housing and Communities be authorised, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Vibrant City and the Director of Finance, to accept the award of grant funding from the Football Foundation for Portfolio 1 and subject to further successful applications for Portfolios 2-5 and enter into any required funding agreements for the delivery of up to five PlayZones within Sunderland;
- (ii) the funding arrangements for the delivery of the PlayZones (including the provision by the Council of match funding) and approve any resultant variations to the capital programme be approved;
- (iii) subject to the award of funding for any of the PlayZones being received, the Executive Director of Health, Housing and Communities be authorised, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Vibrant City and the Director of Finance to procure and award contracts for the design and construction of each of the PlayZones and for such contractors to be procured by the Council through the Football Foundations framework on terms to be agreed by the Executive Director of Health Housing and Communities in consultation with the Director of Finance;

- (iv) the Executive Director of Health Housing and Communities be authorised, in consultation with the Director of Finance, to approve any subsequent variations to any contract awarded for the delivery of the PlayZones as may be required to ensure their delivery in accordance with the requirements of the funding arrangements subject always to the funding being available to fund the works; and
- (v) the Director of Finance be authorised to enter into any letting arrangements for the PlayZones on terms (including the grant of rent concessions) to be agreed by the in consultation with the Executive Director of Health Housing and Communities and the Cabinet Secretary.

Swimming Pool Support Fund – Phase 1 Revenue: Hetton Community Pool and Wellness Centre

The Director of Finance submitted a report seeking approval to accept an award of £68,796 grant funding from the Sport England Swimming Pool Support Fund and to provide this funding to Sports and Leisure Management to contribute to the operating costs relating to energy and chemical use incurred in 2023/24 at Hetton Community Pool and Wellness Centre.

Councillor Stewart reported that the Council had submitted a bid proposal in conjunction with Sports and Leisure Management in August 2023 seeking revenue funding support for three priority venues in the city: Hetton Community Pool; Raich Carter Sports Centre; and Sunderland Aquatic Centre.

The funding decision had been announced in September 2023, confirming funding approval for Hetton Community Pool, however the funding bids for Raich Carter and the Aquatic Centre were unsuccessful.

It was a requirement of the support fund that the monies were specifically used to directly support energy and chemical costs at the approved venue.

Councillor Scott said that he was delighted that funds were being directed to Hetton Community Pool as it was a well loved and used community asset.

Councillor Williams was disappointed that the other bids were unsuccessful and was keen to see that these venues were also supported in some way.

10. RESOLVED that the award of £68,796 grant funding from the Sport England Swimming Pool Support Fund (SPSF) to Sports and Leisure Management Ltd for operating costs relating to energy and chemical use incurred in 2023/2024 at Hetton Community Pool and Wellness Centre be approved, on such terms as approved by the Director of Finance in consultation with the Cabinet Secretary.

Repairs to the Old North Pier, New South Pier and Roker Pier

The Executive Director of City Development submitted a report seeking endorsement for emergency repairs which had been undertaken due to storm damage sustained during October 2023 and approval for urgent repairs to the Old North Pier, New South Pier and Roker Pier.

Councillor Johnston reminded Cabinet Members that during October 2023, storm Babet brought severe, adverse weather conditions to the region causing significant damage to Sunderland's piers.

There were fears that resulting debris would block the port's navigational channel and through delegated powers, officers undertook emergency repairs during December 2023 to prevent further damage to these structures and ensure a safe shipping access to the port.

The report sought approval to secure £1.8m capital funding to undertake further urgent repairs to the Old North Pier, New South Pier and Roker Pier. The urgent repairs would be procured in line with the Constitution and with support from the Council's corporate procurement team.

These works were essential in recognition of the listed status of Roker Pier and the important heritage this had to the city. The piers also played a key role in protecting the popular Marine Walk beach and those properties in the immediate vicinity. The Piers also protect access to the Port which is a key economic asset to the city.

Councillor Edgeworth referred to section 4.4 of the report which outlined the reduction to the repairs at Nobles Quay and queried what would happen to the rest of the project.

Councillor Johnston stated that it had been ascertained that only £0.2m was required for immediate works at Nobles Quay and the remainder of the project would be completed in the future.

Having considered the report, it was: -

11. RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the arrangements that have been put in place for the procurement and funding for emergency repairs to the New South Pier due to damage sustained during the October 2023 storms be endorsed;
- (ii) the Executive Director of City Development be authorised, in consultation with the Dynamic City Portfolio Holder and the Director of Finance, be authorised to appoint a contractor(s) for the urgent works for the Old North Pier, New South Pier and Roker Pier; and
- (iii) the funding arrangements for the delivery of the proposed works and the resultant variation in the Capital Programme be approved.

Review of City-Wide Public Spaces Protection Order

The Executive Director of City Development submitted a report advising of the outcome of the review of the current City-Wide Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) and seeking approval for the implementation of a new PSPO for three years.

Councillor Rowntree reported that PSPOs were intended to limit or prohibit certain activities which caused nuisance or led to problems for a community, and as such allowed Councils to make restrictions on activities which were judged to have a detrimental effect on the quality of life in an area.

The current PSPO was due to expire at the end of April 2024 and the intention was to introduce a new PSPO, to run concurrently, for a further three years.

A consultation with partners, local residents and businesses had taken place between 27 November 2023 and 7 January 2024 and using the feedback from this consultation, together with other relevant information including the top ten resident priorities as detailed in the most recent Safer Communities Survey; it was proposed to keep some of current restrictions; amend some of the current restrictions; introduce new restrictions and omit one current restriction.

The current restrictions to remain on the new PSPO were:

- Consumption of alcohol in a public place, causing or likely to cause anti-social behaviour.
- The use of psychoactive substances in a public place
- Restrictions on unauthorised street events on adopted highways.
- Anti-social use of skateboards, bicycles and stunt bicycles causing damage to property and/or nuisance or annoyance to other persons.
- Feeding of gulls and pigeons
- Waste on land
- Bin raking activity
- Urinating and defecating in public places.
- Spitting and discarding chewing gum
- Exclusion of dogs from play areas, sport pitches, resort areas, dogs to be placed on leads when requested to do so by an authorised officer, and requirement for dog walkers to be able to produce a suitable means of picking up after their dog

It was proposed to amend three current restrictions:

- Extension to the current shopping trolley restrictions, which current only covered designated areas in Washington, to cover the citywide area. This followed a consensus from retailers as part of the consultation exercise. Exact locations would be determined prior to the making of the legal order.
- Extension of the existing dog fouling powers to include land which was open to the air and that the public had access to. At present this restriction only covered Council land.
- The current restriction around motorcycles and quadbikes was to be extended to include the anti-social use of motorised scooters and bikes.

In response to the consultation, the new PSPO sought to introduce four new restrictions including:

- A requirement that dog walkers can / will reduce the length of a dog lead to suitable length in order to ensure the dog was under control and at heel when requested by an authorised officer.
- A measure that would require a person to provide their personal details, including their name, address and DOB to an authorised officer upon request
- A restriction that would prohibit smoking and vaping in all designated play areas.
- A restriction which would prohibit activities associated with car cruising, causing danger or risk of injury to road users (including pedestrians), causing damage or risk of damage to property, speeding or racing, performing stunts, sounding horns or playing music, so as to cause a nuisance or annoyance, using foul or abusive language, using threatening or intimidating behaviour; or causing obstruction (whether moving or stationary).

There was more appropriate legislation contained under Part 4 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 and the Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act which dealt with loitering and begging and aggressive street trading, therefore it was proposed that the current restrictions regarding these measures were omitted from the new PSPO.

Councillor Scott noted that the key issue coming through the residents' survey was tackling anti-social behaviour and it was important to see this addressed in the PSPO.

Councillor Edgeworth commented that he felt this PSPO had the balance right and the approach to alcohol and dog walkers was sensible, he was however interested to see how the approach to aggressive begging would work in practice. He went on to say that he felt that residents would welcome the steps on motorbikes, car cruising and dog fouling and that enforcement was the key to all of these measures.

Councillor Rowntree agreed that this was the public were asking for and thanked Members for their support. The Council was always seeking to improve the city for everyone and the PSPO was one of the tools to do this.

Councillor Williams noted that car cruising seemed to be increasing and the dumping of shopping trolleys was a particular issue in Washington. She also felt that it was time to deal with issues relating to dogs more severely.

Having fully considered the report it was: -

12. RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the introduction of measures set out in sections 5.9 – 5.26 of the report be endorsed and the omission of the measures set out in section 5.27 – 5.28 of the report in the making of a new 3-year City Wide Public Spaces Protection Order for the city be agreed;

- (ii) it be agreed to keep the fixed penalty amounts the same for breaches of the PSPO, which is currently set at £100, reduced to £75 if paid within 10 days as set out in paragraph. 6 of the report; and
- (iii) the Executive Director of City Development be authorised, in consultation with the Deputy Leader of the Council as portfolio holder and the Assistant Director of Law and Governance, to determine the final form of the PSPO and to take all steps in connection with the making of the PSPO.

Sunderland Business Improvement District (BID) Operating Agreement

The Executive Director of City Development submitted a report informing the Cabinet of the current position in respect of Sunderland Business Improvement District (BID) Ltd and seeking approval for a series of support measures during its third term, commencing on 1 April 2024 for a period of five years.

Councillor Stewart advised that businesses in the city centre first voted in favour of establishing Sunderland BID Ltd in July 2013 before it formally took effect from April 2014 following a ballot. After a successful first term, businesses voted for a second term in 2018.

During its second term the BID had led on a range of initiatives developed with the business community and key stakeholders and an overview of these initiatives was set out in the report.

Sunderland BID had now been successful in securing a third, five-year term, which would begin when the current term came to an end on 31 March 2024. This was announced, following a ballot, on 30 November 2023 and it was anticipated that this would generate more than £3.5m via levy payments to address priorities identified with the City Centre business community.

Ahead of the ballot, the BID worked with businesses, partners and stakeholders to develop a Business Plan which focused on three key priorities: City Pride, City Voice and City Promotion. Following the ballot, the BID was charged by the business community with delivering against this Business Plan and adjusting to emerging needs and priorities.

Councillor Stewart advised that, as with the first and second terms, the Council was required by the Business Improvement Districts (England) Regulations 2004 to support the BID with several key aspects including levy imposition, collection and administration. It was proposed that the successful working practices established during the first and second term were continued.

On this basis, the Council would collect the BID levy from levy payers, follow pre-agreed practices in relation to the recovery of non-payment of levy, and would make regular payments to the BID of levy collected. Equally, the Council would identify

two Elected Members to continue Council representation on the Board of Sunderland BID Ltd.

Ongoing liaison and support would also continue to be provided by the Council's Business Investment Team, acting as first point of contact to support the BID wherever possible in achieving its outcomes.

It was also proposed that financial assistance would be allocated to support the work of the BID, recognising the contribution independent businesses make, and have the potential to make, to the strength and diversity of the City Centre's offer.

Councillor Williams welcomed the continuation of the Council's relationship with the BID; they did great work with the Authority and were a strong partner. She was also pleased to see the widening out of the BID boundary to include the Beacon of Light and Hilton Garden Hotel.

13. RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the requirement for the Council to enter into a new Operating Agreement with Sunderland BID Ltd for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2029 in accordance with The Business Improvement Districts (England) Regulations 2004, be noted and endorsed; and
- (ii) the Executive Director of City Development be authorised, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Dynamic City, to grant financial assistance of £50,000 per annum for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2029 to Sunderland BID Ltd to support work targeted at independent businesses and on such other terms as may be approved.

Sunniside Regeneration Update and Sunniside Place Strategy

The Executive Director of City Development submitted a report providing an update on the regeneration of Sunniside and seeking approval for the launch of the Sunniside Place Strategy which set out a 10-year vision and delivery plan for the regeneration of this part of the city.

Councillor Johnston highlighted that Sunniside was an area of real potential and was the beating heart of Sunderland's creative economy. It had however suffered from a cycle of failing employment and economic activity, rising crime and anti-social behaviour, depopulation, and physical decay. To address these challenges and allow Sunniside to fulfil its incredible potential as a liveable, creative neighbourhood there needed to be a clear strategy and action plan for social and economic growth.

Over the last 18 months there had been an extensive programme of community, stakeholder and member engagement which had culminated in the production of the Sunniside Place Strategy which provided a clear direction and vision and identified the actions needed to bring about positive change and secure long-term stewardship by the people who live, work, and play in the area.

At the same time there had been several early interventions which had been successfully delivered in partnership with Town, SAIL, the Sunderland BID, and other partners to address crime and anti-social behaviour, acquire strategic property, and bring vibrancy and activity to the neighbourhood.

A steering group and a series of sector based working groups had been established to support delivery of the action plan set out in the place strategy and there was now a need to launch the place strategy and procure the wider resources that were needed to implement its recommendations.

14. RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the progress update provided in the report in relation to the regeneration of the Sunnyside area be noted; and
- (ii) the launch of the Sunnyside Place Strategy be approved and the Executive Director of City Development be authorised, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the portfolio Holder for Dynamic City and the Director of Finance, to procure all of the necessary resources to implement the delivery plan included in the Sunnyside Place Strategy (including where relevant the extension and variation of existing appointments) subject to the terms set out in the report.

Riverside Park, Riverside Sunderland

The Executive Director of City Development submitted a report updating Cabinet on the proposed design and delivery strategy for Riverside Park and seeking approval to procure the resources required to deliver the initial phases of this key element of the Riverside Sunderland masterplan.

Councillor Rowntree reported that Riverside Park would connect the new development and residential communities being delivered at Riverside Sunderland, provide a high quality, accessible, biodiverse, green space, and an essential recreational asset to promote wellbeing and inclusion and support healthy active lifestyles.

A concept design had been produced for Riverside Park which breaks the site down into character areas and delivery parcels and proposed a phased approach to delivery.

Phase 1 would include the delivery of the new Park Entrance and Water Gardens and Kingsley Gardens – a new community garden which would be key to engaging the local community and stakeholders in the design delivery and future management of the park. Essential utility services would also be installed to support the creation of a riverside event space that would bring activation and vibrancy.

CGI images of the proposed spaces were appended to the report and subject to Cabinet approval, the delivery of the Phase 1 works would commence in Summer 2024 and be complete in time for an events programme in Summer 2025.

Councillor Rowntree confirmed that the cost of the works could be funded from the approved Capital Programme.

15. RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the Executive Director of City Development be authorised, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Dynamic City, and the Director of Finance, to take all necessary steps to procure the delivery of parcels 2,3 and 7 of Riverside Park as identified on the plan in Appendix 1 (“the Scheme”), including the award of all construction contracts and any other relevant professional appointments; and
- (ii) the Executive Director of City Development be authorised, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Dynamic City and the Director of Finance, to approve any subsequent variations to any construction contracts as may be required to deliver the Scheme subject always to adequate funding being available within the approved project budget.

Highway Maintenance (including Bridges) and Integrated Transport Capital Programme 2024/2025

The Executive Director of City Development submitted a report seeking approval to the Highway Maintenance and the Integrated Transport Capital Programme 2024-2025 and to the amendments made to the 2023—2024 programme.

Councillor Johnston stated that the City’s highway network and structural assets were integral to economic development and provided access to employment, education and other key services. A well-maintained, safe and accessible highway network was vital to a vibrant economy.

The Council’s 2024-2025 Capital Programme had been approved by Cabinet in January and then ratified by the Council. The headline capital allocations were contained within the January Cabinet report.

A schedule of streets and structures has been prepared, following conditional surveys, which would form the basis of the forthcoming programme and these were set out in appendices 1 to 6 of the report.

Councillor Johnston advised Cabinet Members that due to cost increases and ongoing going utility works across the city, some of the 2023-2024 schemes would be carried over into the 2024-2025 Programme.

It was also highlighted that cost pressures, weather conditions and utility works would continue to have some impact on the 2024-25 maintenance programme. Integrated transport schemes would also be subject to public and statutory consultation.

The programmes of work would be funded from government grants supplemented by prudential borrowing as detailed in Appendix 7 of the report.

Following consideration of the report, it was: -

16. RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the highway maintenance schemes set out in Appendix 1 be approved;
- (ii) the bridge maintenance schemes set out in Appendix 3 be approved;
- (iii) the Integrated Transport Capital Programme schemes set out in Appendix 5 be approved; and
- (iv) amendments to those schemes deferred from the 2023-2024 capital programme set out in Appendices 2, 4 and 6 be approved.

Delivery of Electric Vehicle Residential Community Charging Hubs

The Executive Director of City Development submitted a report seeking approval to deliver Electric Vehicle Residential Community Charging Hubs and subsequent procurement and appointment of a single charge-point operator to supply, manage and operate the charge-points.

Councillor Johnston stated that a programme of works was planned to deliver these Hubs in phases across the city. These works followed delivery of a pilot scheme and 115 charge-points within the Riverside Sunderland multi-storey car park.

This proposal was to procure and appoint a charge-point operator to enable further phases to be delivered. The total cost estimate for these capital works was £1.16m and this would include:

- Phase two of the “Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure” (LEVI) which included 46 charge-points at twenty hub locations.
- Subject to award in March 2024, delivery of 28 charge-points at fifteen hub locations. The capital costs for this and the above phase were to be met from grant funding and the charge-point operator. There was no requirement for any Council match funding.

A charge-point operator had offered to fully fund the replacement of existing legacy charge-points owned by the Council across thirteen locations. This would be fully funded directly by the charge-point operator and would include a revenue share arrangement with the Council. Subject to the proposal being agreed, the next steps will be to procure and appoint a contractor with works being completed by 31 March 2025.

Councillor Edgeworth welcomed the proposals and commended the ambition of the project which would enable more local people to be able to use locally produced electric cars. He also thanked officers who had been involved on the consultation on the proposals.

Accordingly it was: -

17. RESOLVED that: -

- (i) a programme of works to deliver Electric Vehicle Residential Community Charging Hubs in phases across the city as detailed in section 4 of the report be approved;
- (ii) the Executive Director of City Development be authorised, in consultation with the Dynamic City Portfolio Holder, to procure and subsequently appoint a single contractor to supply, manage and operate the charge-points;
- (iii) subject to confirmation of the funding, the inclusion of the additional funding for the Office for Zero Emission Vehicle funded On-Street Residential Charging Scheme and the resultant variation to the Capital Programme be approved;
- (iv) the Executive Director of City Development be authorised, in consultation with the Dynamic City Portfolio Holder to procure a concession agreement with an operator in respect of the existing legacy charge points set out in paragraph 4.4; and
- (v) the Chief Executive, Executive Director of City Development and/or the Assistant Director of Law and Governance be authorised to execute all legal documents as required to give effect to the above.

Proposed Delivery Model for the Provision of Biodiversity Net Gain

The Executive Director of City Development and the Director of Finance submitted a joint report advising Cabinet about the introduction of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (“BNG”) and seek the necessary approvals to implement a delivery model for the provision of BNG in Sunderland, including the use of Council owned land and the passporting of monies secured from third party developers for the delivery of BNG to enhance the city’s natural environment.

Councillor Rowntree explained that the delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) was to be a mandatory requirement in most planning approvals and the Council therefore wished to establish a mechanism to support the delivery of BNG in Sunderland to continue to facilitate development and promote the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the city.

The legislation required the developer to demonstrate how they would deliver their 10% net gain, including identifying where any off-site compensation would be located. This would need to be set out by the developer in a net gain plan, which would need to be approved by the local planning authority prior to implementation of planning consent.

The delivery model proposed would promote the delivery of BNG on suitable Council owned sites and, as a result of implementing the Environment Act legislation, assist the Council in improving the management of land for BNG purposes and enhancing the city's natural environment.

The delivery model would also enable the Council to comply with its Biodiversity duty as set out in the Environment Act and assist with delivery of the emerging South of Tyne and Wear Local Nature Recovery Strategy. As many of these sites had the benefit of public access, which would be retained, this provided the potential for positive health and wellbeing impacts for the city's residents.

Councillor Rowntree stated that given the technical expertise involved in managing the sites, and the need for the Council to retain its oversight and enforcement powers as a local planning authority, it was considered that the most appropriate initial approach would be to work with Durham Wildlife Trust (DWT).

Councillor Edgeworth referred to the Barnes Park extension and that local residents wanted the grass to be cut but the proposal was for it to be left uncut. He suggested that there was some work to be done to bring people on board and this buy-in needed to be backed up with enforcement as the area was currently being chewed up by bikes. The proposed location was big enough to both be used by local people and to also have biodiversity.

Councillor Rowntree agreed that community buy-in was important and she said that she was happy to work with ward councillors on this.

18. RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the implementation of mandatory BNG at a minimum of 10% as a condition of most planning approvals following the enactment of the requisite parts of the Environment Act 2021 be noted;
- (ii) the principle of the use of appropriate Council sites for the delivery of BNG be approved and the Executive Director of City Development be authorised, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and the Director of Finance, to identify and determine which Council sites shall be made available for BNG;
- (iii) the Director of Finance be authorised, in consultation with the Executive Director of City Development and the Cabinet Secretary, to grant leasehold interests on such terms as are approved (including where appropriate the grant of rent concessions) to relevant third parties of Council land for the delivery and management of BNG;
- (iv) the Assistant Director of Law and Governance be authorised to advertise the proposed leasehold disposal for BNG purposes of any land intended for such use which is held as open space in accordance with section 123 (2A) of the Local Government Act 1972 and the Director of Finance be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet

Secretary and the Executive Director of City Development to consider and determine any objections made in response to such notice;

- (v) the Executive Director of City Development be authorised, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and the Director of Finance, to acquire third party land for the subsequent delivery of BNG and/or wider ecological mitigation works on such terms as may be agreed, provided there is available budget provision for the relevant acquisition; and
- (vi) the provision of grant funding received via Section 106 contributions or through a Conservation Covenant to relevant third parties to deliver and manage BNG on Council sites be authorised, such funding to be provided on terms agreed by the Executive Director of City Development in consultation with the Deputy Leader and the Director of Finance.

Proposal to Procure and Award Contracts for the new Thorney Close School Buildings

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report setting out a proposal to procure a contractor and award contracts for the construction of the new Thorney Close Primary School buildings at the site of the former Sunningdale Primary School.

Councillor Williams advised that the Council had included a replacement of Thorney Close Primary School's buildings in the 2020 Capital Programme. The current school had significant condition needs but was also based at a site that was no longer considered appropriate for a school of Thorney Close Primary's size. The new school building would be based 200 metres away from the current school site at the vacant former Sunningdale School site. It would accommodate 315 school aged pupils, a nursery for 2, 3 and 4 year olds and would have a separate provision for children with hearing impairments.

Subject to Cabinet's approval of this proposal, it was expected that a contractor would be identified to develop the building in the Autumn with work starting at the school's new site in November 2024. The school would be complete in Winter 2025 and would welcome pupils from January 2026.

The Leader commended the report and was delighted to see new schools being built in the city.

Councillor Edgeworth welcomed the report and noted that a lot of work had been done with pupils and parents to develop the new school and the proposed development looked exciting.

Upon consideration of the report, it was: -

19. RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the Director of Children's Services be authorised, in consultation with the Director of Finance and the Portfolio Holder for Children, Learning and Skills to procure and award all required contracts for the completion of construction works to deliver a new build Thorney Close Primary School on the site of the former Sunningdale Primary School; and
- (ii) the Assistant Director of Law and Governance be authorised to execute all relevant documents in order to give effect to the above.

School Admission Arrangements for the 2025/2026 Academic Year

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report seeking approval for the proposed maintained school admission arrangements for the academic year September 2025-2026.

Councillor Scott advised that the report set out the Council's proposed school admission arrangements for Local Authority Maintained schools in the 2025/2026 academic year. The arrangements outlined within the report would apply only to maintained schools, with Voluntary Aided, Free Schools and Academies responsible for the establishment of their own arrangements.

The Council had not proposed any changes to the scheme previously agreed in 2024/2025 or changes to the capacity of any local authority-maintained schools. Based on current applications for school places it was estimated that there would be a surplus of reception and year 7 places across most of the school planning areas in the city in September 2024. Some schools were projected to be oversubscribed but sufficient places existed to offer any parent who had not secured their preferred school place a reasonable local alternative.

Upon consideration of the report, it was: -

20. RESOLVED that the following, as set out in the report and appendices 1 -3, be approved for the 2025-2026 academic year: -

- (i) The admissions policy and procedures associated with the co-ordinated scheme of admissions;
- (ii) The criteria that will be applied for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools where over-subscription occurs; and
- (iii) The published admission numbers (PANs).

Funding Arrangements for the Adult Education Budget – Family, Adult and Community Learning Provision for 2024/2025

The Director of Children’s Services submitted a report seeking approval for the competitive process by which funding from the North East Mayoral Combined Authority (NEMCA) would be awarded to providers for the delivery of Adult Education Budget – Family, Adult and Community Learning training courses in the academic year 2024/25 to support the city’s strategic priorities.

Councillor Williams directed Cabinet Members to section 3 of the report which stated that the Council would receive grant funding from NEMCA from August 2024 which would provide external funding to deliver training and skills for the residents of Sunderland. The Council would commission adult and community education which played a vital role in supporting residents on their journey to learn skills to enter, return or progress in work. Alongside the economic benefits, it reduced loneliness and made people happier, healthier, more confident, capable and resilient – making places smarter and more inclusive.

The value of the funding was approximately £1.4m for academic year 2024/25 and as detailed in Section 5 of the report the decision would enable the Council to comply with the grant funding requirements of NEMCA and ensure the delivery of training outcomes for the residents of Sunderland. The competitive selection model demonstrated best use of resources and secured value for money, creating maximum impact from the funding available.

21. RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the competitive process to be followed that will enable the identification and selection of suitable providers to ensure the delivery of training outcomes that support the city’s strategic priorities be agreed; and
- (ii) the Director of Children’s Services be authorised, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children, Learning and Skills, to undertake the competitive process for providers of Family, Adult and Community Learning training courses in the academic year 2024/2025, as set out in the report, and subsequently to award the proposed funding agreements to the successful providers.

Grant Funding to Third Sector Organisations Providing Social Care Related Services

The Director of Adult Services submitted a report seeking approval to award funding to two third sector organisations, specifically Sunderland People First Community Interest Company and Washington Mind, which provided social care related services.

Councillor Chequer advised that Sunderland People First (SPF), were a self-advocacy group for people with learning disabilities and autism. SPF represented, championed and campaigned for the rights of people with a learning disability and

autism to ensure that people were seen as equal citizens in society; that they had their voices heard so that they could have the best life; access to and experience of services that they could and that their rights were promoted and upheld. The grant funding was for £107,441 in 2024/25.

Washington Mind was the lead partner in a consortium with Sunderland Mind and Sunderland Headlight, providing a My Life Support project to people with mental health needs. The project promoted practical help with day to day living that people with mental health problems often needed in order to stay well and live a full life. The project provided people with information, advice, support and guidance, all of which were essential factors for people to develop the capacity to problem solve, stay well and reduce risk of relapse. The grant funding was for £132,205 in 2024/25.

The Council recognised and supported the important work that these organisations were carrying out to support the City's vulnerable residents.

Councillor Williams welcomed the report and commented that Washington Mind was in her ward and it was great to see the impact that the organisation had. Councillor Scott endorsed this point and noted that the difference that the organisation could have on lives was amazing.

Councillor Rowntree commented that Sunderland People First were a crucial advocacy group and she welcomed the additional support for both of the organisations. The Leader added that he had met with Sunderland People First when he was first a Cabinet Member and was staggered by the results of the investment into the organisation which had enabled people to be the best they could be.

Having considered the report, it was: -

22. RESOLVED that: -

- (i) approval be given to the award of:
 - a) grant funding for 2024/2025 of £107,441 to Sunderland People First, who are a self-advocacy group for people with learning disabilities and autism; and
 - b) grant funding for 2024/2025 of £132,205 to Washington Mind, who are the lead partner in a consortium with Sunderland Mind and Sunderland Headlight, providing a My Life Support project to people with mental health needs.
- (ii) the Director of Adult Service be authorised, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Healthy City and the Director of Finance to determine and award grant funding to the above organisations for 2025/2026 and 2026/2027 subject to funding being available within the approved budget.

Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006

At the instance of the Chair, it was: -

23. RESOLVED that in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 the public be excluded during consideration of the remaining business as it was considered to involve a likely disclosure of exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraph 3). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

(Signed) G MILLER
 Chair

Note: -

The above minutes comprise only those relating to items during which the meeting was open to the public.

Additional minutes in respect of other items are included in Part II.