

CABINET MEETING – 8 SEPTEMBER 2022

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 extraordinary meeting held on 14 July 2022, Part I.

Action Required:

To confirm the minutes as a correct record.

At a Meeting of the **CABINET** held in **CITY HALL (COMMITTEE ROOM 1)** on **THURSDAY 14 JULY 2022** at **10.00a.m.**

Present:-

Councillor G. Miller in the Chair

Councillors Farthing, K. Johnston, Rowntree, Stewart and Williams

Also present:-

Councillors Price, Scott and P. Walker, Deputy Cabinet Members
Councillor Edgeworth

Part I

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 9 June 2022, Part I (copy circulated) were submitted.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 9 June 2022, Part I, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest

The following declarations of interest were made:-

Agenda Item 11 –
Acceptance and award of
grant funding to the
Sunderland BID Limited

Councillors G. Miller and Rowntree declared
interests as Council Representatives on the board
of Sunderland BID Limited and withdrew from the
meeting during consideration of the report.

Agenda Item 19 – The
letting of Unit 6,
International Drive, IAMP,
Washington, SR5 3HX

Councillors G. Miller and C. Rowntree together with
Peter McIntyre, Executive Director of City
Development, declared interests as Council
representatives on the board of IAMP LLP.
However, as the Council is the long leasehold
owner of the relevant unit and this is a letting
decision by the Council, not IAMP LLP, they were
permitted to remain and participate in the
consideration of the item.

Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Chequer and F. Miller.

The Improvement of Bereavement Services

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide an update of ongoing service developments within Bereavement Services and to seek approval in relation to a number of decisions which support continued service development.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Rowntree reminded Cabinet Members of a report considered by Cabinet in June 2021, which described a range of service changes and improvements which were agreed. She highlighted the report on the agenda which now looked at detailed changes to the previous regulations, the implementation of the regulations and a range of further improvements.

Cabinet Members were advised that specifically, the report was seeking approval for:

- The revised Cemetery and Crematorium Regulations
- The implementation of managing the historical position in relation to regulation breaches and historic memorial items
- The introduction of new opportunities to support bereaved families

Councillor Rowntree reported that since the last report, officers had worked hard to ensure the compilation of a detailed understanding of the impact of the necessary management of cemeteries, the individual graves therein and also the position in relation to long standing memorial items.

Councillor Rowntree was confident that the arrangements to be implemented would be done so in the most sensitive way possible. She acknowledged that this might still prove difficult for some families but the need for these changes and the overall improvements they would deliver was recognised. She welcomed the move to provide more opportunities to remember loved ones and to provide support to those residents who wished to engage with this support.

Councillor Williams commented that it was good to see the range of different options which were available for families to remember loved ones and the Leader noted that the team had put a lot of work into this element of the service.

The Chair invited Councillor Edgeworth, who was observing the meeting, to comment. Councillor Edgeworth referred to section 9.3 of the policy which said that applications must be made at least three working days before the time of interment. He highlighted that the Islamic faith required burials to take place within 24 hours of death and as he represented a ward with a sizeable Muslim community, he would be happy to discuss these matters outside of the meeting.

Cabinet Members having been advised that these improvements would move the service from a burial and cremation service to a Bereavement Service, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the revised Cemetery and Crematorium Regulations be approved;
- (ii) the Service implement the sensitive management of historic Regulation breaches;
- (iii) the Service implement management of historic memorial items; and
- (iv) the implementation of extended access at Sunderland Crematorium for memorial purposes be approved.

The Management of Trees and Plantations on Council land

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) requesting the consideration of a Policy and Delivery Plan for the management of trees and plantations on Council land.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Rowntree was pleased to bring this report which set out a proposed policy for how the Council would manage trees and plantations. She added that the report also requested approval to commission support to address some current issues in relation to the Council's tree stock.

Cabinet Members were advised that specifically, the report was seeking approval for:

- The Tree Management Policy and Delivery Plan;
- The procurement of specialist arbor services to support the delivery plan; and
- The integration of the tree management approach in wider strategies for trees and carbon management and parks and open spaces.

Councillor Rowntree drew attention to the scale of the tree stock and a range of concerns in relation to disease, age and the impact of climate changes and recent storms detailed in the report. She advised that the report also identified how the Council could respond to these issues in a planned and sustainable way.

The attention of Cabinet Members was drawn to the policy appended to the report which provided clarity in relation to how the Council would prioritise work, the timescales for this and risk assessments.

Councillor Williams welcomed the report and noted that the policy would enable issues to be worked through and the clearly set out levels of prioritisation would be very helpful when speaking to residents. The Leader added that the Policy and Delivery Plan showed the Council's determination to get this right and emphasised the strength of the Authority's green credentials.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the Tree Management Policy and Delivery Plan be approved;
- (ii) approval be given to procure specialist arbor services to support delivery of the plan;
- (iii) the intention to bring forward a Tree Strategy ,which considers the overall approach to trees including the contribution to the Council's Carbon Management Strategy, how trees are considered in the context of planning and development and the tree stock is managed, be noted; and
- (iv) the intention to bring forward a Parks and Open Spaces strategy, which will be consistent with the Tree Management Policy, be noted.

Capital Programme First Review 2022/2023 (including Treasury Management)

The Executive Director of Corporate Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which detailed:

- (i) the outcome of the First Capital Review for 2022/2023; and
- (ii) progress in implementing the Treasury Management Borrowing and Investment Strategy for 2022/2023.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Stewart highlighted the report and drew attention to the anticipated capital investment this financial year which had increased by £1.6 million. He explained that the overall increase included:

- the reprofiling of expenditure into future years primarily because of external influences outside of the Council's control, including as a result of impacts from Covid-19 and Ukraine War, or the realignment of projects to ensure best value was achieved; and
- the addition of new schemes or variations to schemes within the Capital Programme – primarily as a result of confirmation of additional external grant funding.

Cabinet Members were advised that these variations were set out in Appendix A and that the revised capital programme therefore had investment of over £343 million in the city this year.

Moving on to the Treasury Management aspects of the report, Councillor Stewart reported that as noted at paragraph 5.2 of the report, the Council remained fully compliant with the Treasury Management prudential indicators. He advised that following recent rises in the Bank of England base interest rate, PWLB borrowing rates had also begun to rise. He assured that the rates would be closely monitored along with the Council's cash flow requirements to see when further borrowing should be taken to fund the capital programme. He added that investment rates of return were also beginning to rise in response to the Bank of England's base rate increases.

At this juncture, Councillor Stewart highlighted that it was Jon Ritchie's last Cabinet and he wished to place on record his thanks and appreciation for all of the support he had received and wished Jon well for the future.

Councillor Stewart went on to say that the Cabinet should reflect on a Capital Programme which was investing £343m in the city in one year. This investment was co-ordinated and was in response to key asks on the doorstep and would provide a cleaner, greener place to live.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was;-

4. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) in respect of the first capital review for 2022/2023, the inclusion of additional schemes or variations to existing schemes for 2022/2023 detailed at Appendix A be approved; and
- (ii) in relation to the Treasury Management Strategy, the progress in implementing the 2022/2023 Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators be noted.

First Revenue Budget Review 2022/2023

The Executive Director of Corporate Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to detail of the outcome of the Revenue Budget First Review for 2022/2023.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Stewart drew attention to paragraph 3.1.4 of the report which summarised the financial pressures the Council was currently facing. He reported that demand and cost pressures continued in social care, the legacy impact of the covid-19 pandemic was providing some continued pressures and income shortfalls, and as the Council looked to emerge out of the pandemic increasing inflation levels were impacting Council budgets. He advised that in overall terms a £3.941 million overspend was forecast at this early stage in the financial year, which was largely driven by children's social care pressures. He referred to the full details by Portfolio set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

Cabinet Members were advised that this forecast position took into account some savings arising from Treasury Management activity which was linked to capital programme expenditure reprofiling, as noted at section 3.6 of the report.

Councillor Stewart reported that general Government grant funding support for Councils for the impact of the pandemic had now ended and the indication from the Government was that no additional funding would be provided to mitigate inflationary pressures hitting Councils this year. He advised that the Council would continue, alongside regional and national colleagues to make the case for local authorities to be adequately funded by Government to enable councils to deliver services and importantly meet their social care responsibilities.

Councillor Stewart commented that the current situation was worrying as Government decisions were unlikely to be made until after the new Leader of the Conservative party was elected and all candidates had indicated that they intended to cut spending. During this period of uncertainty, the Council remained committed to the needs of its communities, for example, removing pest control charges and the commitment to free bulky waste removal from next April.

Councillor Farthing also expressed concern about the Government which appeared to be committed to cutting taxes which would equate to less money for public services. Councillor Farthing highlighted that she had a forecasted deficit in her portfolio area at this early stage in the financial year due to the high costs of children's social care. The level of child poverty in the North East was dramatically increasing which did not bode well for children's services and additional funding for Together for Children still did not meet demands.

Cabinet Members were reminded that the budget for this year was reliant on the inclusion of £5.8 million worth of savings initiatives. As noted in paragraph 3.3.2, of these savings plans, 78% of the savings had been delivered, 18% were making good progress and at this stage 4% were considered undeliverable as planned and were factored into the budget forecast position. In summary, the Council would continue to seek to mitigate the overspend where possible, whilst ensuring it continued to play its full part in supporting its residents and businesses through the cost-of-living crisis.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

5. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the contents of the report be noted; and
- (ii) the contingency transfers proposed at Section 3.4 of the report be approved.

Local Council Tax Support Scheme

The Executive Director of Corporate Services submitted a report (copy circulated) requesting approval to commence a consultation process on the Local Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTSS) for the financial year 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 – which was the Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme under section 13A(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Stewart reported that the Local Council Tax Support Scheme was initially implemented from 1 April 2013 and had undergone minor changes since that date primarily reflecting Government amendments to the prescribed regulations.

The attention of Cabinet Members was drawn to paragraph 4.2 of the report, which set out that the introduction and continued rollout of universal credit presented a number of challenges in the administration of the scheme as well as impacting on residents.

Councillor Stewart advised that in order to improve the efficiency of the scheme, it was proposed to consult upon a banded local council tax support scheme for 2023/24. He explained that as with the current scheme, claimants of a pension age would be unaffected as they would retain the same levels of protection as they had done under the old Council Tax Scheme. In addition, a range of income disregards would continue to be applied.

Cabinet Members were advised that consultation would be undertaken with residents through 'Let's Talk' ensuring engagement with those directly impacted and also with the Council's precepting bodies. The outcome of the consultation and proposals for the local council tax support scheme would be presented to Cabinet for consideration in December 2022 or January 2023.

Councillor Farthing referred to the link between Universal Credit and local council tax support and that the two child limit for all Government funding was disadvantaging larger families. There needed to be cognisance of child poverty when administering this scheme and it should be noted that the latest guidance highlighted that single people were the most likely to live in poverty

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

6. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the commencement of consultation on the LCTSS for the financial year 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 be approved; and
- (ii) the Executive Director of Corporate Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Secretary, be authorised to determine the LCTSS models to be consulted upon.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Multiply – Endorse the submission process for Sunderland’s investment plans and approve the Council’s role as Lead Authority for the management and administration of both programmes

The Executive Director of Corporate Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to seek approval to endorse the submission process for Sunderland’s investment plans for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (“UKSPF) and the Multiply programmes, acknowledging that the Multiply investment plan had to be submitted by the deadline of 30 June 2022. It also sought approval of the Council’s role as Lead Authority for the two programmes including responsibility for programme management and administration, monitoring, evaluation and assurance, procurement and contracting, and other requirements as set out in the Government’s Funding Agreements.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Stewart highlighted that in addition to seeking approval to endorse the submission process for Sunderland’s investment plans for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Multiply programmes by the deadline of 30 June 2022, the submission deadline for the UKSPF investment plan was 1 August 2022. He advised that it also sought approval of the Council’s role as Lead Authority for the two programmes including responsibility for programme management and administration, monitoring, evaluation and assurance, procurement and contracting, and other requirements to be set out in the Government’s Funding Agreements.

The attention of Cabinet Members was drawn to section 3 of the report and Cabinet Members were reminded that the Government published the detailed guidance and area allocations for both the UKSPF and Multiply programmes in April 2022. Sunderland’s allocation for UKSPF was £14,936,161 and for Multiply was £1,641,730. Both programmes would operate until March 2025, with the Government expected to announce the approval of both investment plans in September/October 2022.

Councillor Stewart reported that the primary goal of the UKSPF was to build pride in place and increase life chances across the UK, with a focus on 3 investment priorities namely, communities and place, supporting local business, and people and skills. He added that the Multiply initiative was focused on improving functional adult numeracy levels and would support the delivery of new adult numeracy activities at a local level.

Cabinet Members were advised to note that local government had been given responsibility for developing both investment plans for approval by Government, and for the management and delivery of the two funds thereafter. The Lead Authority role would involve being the Accountable Body for funding, receiving the area's allocation to manage, assessing project applications, establishing contracting arrangements, processing claims and payments and undertaking day-to-day monitoring.

Councillor Stewart referred to the development and submission of Sunderland's investment plans as set out in section 4 of the report which had included the Council conducting wide-ranging engagement with public bodies, business organisations and representatives, and the voluntary and community sector. He explained that during May and June 2022, the Council had organised 5 community based workshops, a business workshop with representatives of the business community and business support organisations, and a Multiply workshop with education and training providers. In addition, the Council had participated in regional workshops to explore opportunities and common areas at a regional level.

Cabinet Members were advised that the Council had also launched a local call for expressions of interest to identify early project ideas and to gather evidence about local challenges and priorities, existing delivery, gaps in local provision and examples of good practice. All this engagement and information gathering had helped to inform the content of the investment plans. The UKSPF prospectus also set out the requirements to ensure that a local partnership group was in place to provide local insight and expertise and identify needs and opportunities. The Sunderland City Board would act as the local partnership group for UKSPF purposes. Government assessment of both plans would take place over the summer and, subject to approval, the first funded activities would then begin once the plans were finalised.

Councillor Williams said that she welcomed any money coming into the city but noted that the management and administration of the programme would require a lot of officer time and expertise and the funds were a drop in the ocean compared to what had been lost in revenue over the last 12 years. Councillor Williams also referenced the tight timescales for expressions of interest and felt that this would increase pressure on the voluntary sector.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

7. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the submission process for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund investment plan be endorsed and the Executive Director of Corporate Services, in consultation with the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council, be authorised to submit the plan by the deadline of 1 August 2022;
- (ii) the submission process for the Multiply investment plan, which was submitted by the earlier deadline of 30 June 2022, be noted;

- (iii) approval be given to the Council's role as the Lead Authority ("Accountable Body") for the UKSPF and Multiply during programme implementation, delivery and monitoring from April 2022 until March 2025, and through to programme completion and closure in 2025/26;
- (iv) the Executive Director of Corporate Services, in consultation with the Chief Executive of Together for Children / Director of Children's Services (for the Multiply programme), the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Secretary, be authorised to accept the terms of the Funding Agreements with associated conditions from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities ("DLUHC") and Department for Education ("DfE") and to enable delivery of both programmes;
- (v) the Executive Director of Corporate Services, in consultation with the Chief Executive of Together for Children / Director of Children's Services, the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Secretary, be authorised to agree the terms of Local Funding Agreements or contracts with project delivery organisations whose projects are selected for support through the UKSPF or Multiply programmes ("the projects");
- (vi) the Executive Director of Corporate Services and/or the Assistant Director of Law and Governance be authorised to execute all necessary legal agreements in order to give effect to (iii) and (iv) above; and
- (vii) the Executive Director of Corporate Services, in consultation with the Chief Executive of Together for Children / Director of Children's Services and the Cabinet Secretary, be authorised to take all necessary action on behalf of the Council as Accountable Body for the UKSPF and Multiply based on the terms set out in the report including entering into individual project funding agreements and the procurement and award of all necessary contracts.

Approach to Equalities and Socio-Economic Considerations

The Executive Director of Corporate Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide an update on progress in relation to equality and socio-economic considerations, and to approve:-

- (a) governance arrangements in relation to how the Council manages its equality and socio-economic considerations in its operations and decision making;
- (b) the Council's statutory equality objective 2022-2026; and
- (c) the use of an Integrated Impact Assessment tool.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Rowntree highlighted that firstly, the report set out the governance arrangements in relation to how the Council managed its equality and socio-economic considerations in its operations and decision making. She advised that secondly, the report proposed that the Council had one statutory equality objective for the period 2022-2026, namely, "Progress equality performance through the Equality Framework for Local Government."

Cabinet Members were advised that the report also proposed the use of an Integrated Impact Assessment tool to ensure the Public Sector Equality Duty and socio-economic considerations were embedded in decisions, plans, policies, projects and our 'business as usual' approach. It was hoped one streamlined impact assessment process would contribute to improved outcomes, strengthen decision-making and ensure a robust, transparent, whole council approach to meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty; delivering on the Notice of Motion agreed by Council in November to embed socio-economic considerations; and supporting corporate commitments in relation to health, reducing health inequalities, community wealth building and the low carbon/sustainability agendas.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

8. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the governance arrangements in relation to the discharge of the Council's equality duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the adoption, be approved as set out in the report, of socio-economic considerations in its decision making;
- (ii) the draft equality objective for 2022-26: "Progress equality performance through the Equality Framework for Local Government" be agreed;
- (iii) the use of an Integrated Impact Assessment be approved; and
- (iv) annual updates on progress in relation to points (ii) and (iii) above, with an interim report in the first year of implementation to provide assurance be submitted to Cabinet and further detail on the objective be approved.

Acceptance and award of grant funding to the Sunderland BID Limited.

The Executive Director of City Development submitted a report (copy circulated) to accept grant funding from Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group (SCCG) and approve the award of a grant to Sunderland BID Limited ("Sunderland BID").

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Stewart highlighted that the report sought approval to accept and then award the grant of £70,000 that had been received from Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group (SCCG) to Sunderland Business Improvement District. (BID).

Councillor Stewart reported that Sunderland BID had approached SCCG earlier this year to request funding so they could provide additional engaging activity that would enhance healthy living, and address health inequalities across the city. This would involve increasing consumer engagement in the city centre and raise confidence levels in a post-pandemic Sunderland by proactively encouraging participants from the most deprived areas to get involved. Activities would include a roller rink, exercise classes, walking trails, sports, healthy eating demos and workshops as well as activities around general mental wellbeing.

Councillor Walker commented that there were some good ideas for activity and participation but felt that communication of the offer was very important and that there needed to be proactive messages to get all residents involved, not just those living in the city centre.

Councillor Stewart agreed that every corner of the city needed to feel involved and it was noted that a full communication strategy was available. Councillor Scott suggested that this could be provided to all area committee chairs.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

9. RESOLVED that the Executive Director of City Development be authorised to accept a grant award of £70,000 from SCCG and award a subsequent grant of the same amount to Sunderland BID on terms to be agreed by the Executive Director of Corporate Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Secretary and the Executive Director of Corporate Services.

Low Carbon – Progress Report and Action Plan

The Executive Director of City Development submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide an overview of progress to date in relation to Low Carbon and approval was sought for the updated City Council Low Carbon Action Plan.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Rowntree reported that climate change represented a significant challenge for our generation. She advised that over the past 50 years, the average global temperature had increased at the fastest rate in recorded history and the trend was accelerating. She reminded Cabinet Members that in March 2019, Sunderland City Council had acknowledged the scale of this challenge by declaring a Climate Emergency at Council, recognising the immediate action required.

Cabinet Members were advised that over the past decade Sunderland had responded to the climate change crisis in a number of ways and taken steps to reduce its carbon emissions. A partnership board, known as the 2030 Shadow Board, was set up in 2019 and on a quarterly basis it brought together representatives from across the city. The 2030 Shadow Board shaped the development of the city's Low Carbon Framework, adopted in December 2020, and its purpose was to work collectively to drive forward Sunderland's ambitions and commitment to tackling climate change.

In January 2021, Cabinet endorsed the Sunderland Low Carbon Framework, and at the same meeting it also approved the City Council's Low Carbon Action Plan, which set out an ambitious target to become carbon neutral as an organisation by 2030. The Action Plan set out a range of actions and against each of the seven strategic priorities.

Councillor Rowntree reported that since the Council Action Plan was published in January 2021, a range of activity had been progressed across each of the strategic priorities. She advised that the Council had also carried out significant work to understand city-wide and Council emissions data more fully to facilitate an evidence-based approach going forward.

Cabinet Members were advised that as a city, the annual emissions stood at 1,187,000 tonnes of CO² (based on 2019 Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy data) and our annual targets from 2021 onwards had increased to a 14.4% annual reduction, from a previous five -year target (2015-2020) of a 16.2% reduction in total. It was therefore considered an appropriate time to review and strengthen the City Council's Low Carbon Action Plan to take on board the learning to date and ensure continued alignment with the City Plan.

Councillor Rowntree drew attention to an updated City Council Low Carbon Action Plan which had been prepared (at Appendix 1 of the report), with colleagues from across the Council contributing to its development. She explained that the updated Action Plan identified a series of over-arching Objectives under each of the Strategic Priorities to provide a clear structure within which actions had been identified and would continue to be brought forward. In addition, a series of individual actions and associated milestones were set out under these objectives against which progress could be measured and reported on an ongoing basis.

Cabinet Members having been advised that delivery would be reported on an annual basis, including through the publication of a Low Carbon Annual Data Report and quarterly data would also continue to be published on the MySunderland website, it was:-

10. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the level and nature of activity to date in relation to Low Carbon be noted; and
- (ii) the updated City Council Low Carbon Action Plan be approved.

Integrated Transport Block: Structural Maintenance of Bridge Number 015.00 Newcastle Road Bridge

The Executive Director of City Development submitted a report (copy circulated) to seek approval to progress the delivery of the City's Capital Investment Programme namely Structural Maintenance of Newcastle Road Bridge.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Johnston highlighted that the report provided an update and sought required approvals for the Bridge Maintenance Investment Programme, Structural Investigation and repair of Newcastle Road Bridge (ref 15:00).

Councillor Johnston reported that cracking and the potential for spalling concrete had been identified on Newcastle Road Bridge (ref 15:00) carrying Newcastle Road over Network Rail and Nexus Infrastructure on the boundary of Southwick and St Peter's wards. He advised that an estimated cost of £750K was required to carry out intrusive investigation and repairs to the soffit of the bridge deck and would and it would be funded from the Integrated Transport Block allocation.

Cabinet Members were advised that due to constraints of working over Network Rail and Nexus Infrastructure timescales for the work would need to be agreed with Network Rail and Nexus. An option to do nothing was not recommended as it carried a risk of partial failure of the bridge affecting Network rail/Nexus Infrastructure and potential risk to passengers/staff. Ultimately without intervention the bridge would lose structural integrity causing possible weight restriction and closure.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

11. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) subject to the completion of the relevant funding agreement with the North East Joint Transport Committee, the Executive Director of City Development, in consultation with the Dynamic City Portfolio Holder and the Executive Director of Corporate Services, be authorised to take all necessary steps to procure the delivery and completion of the Newcastle Road Bridge Structural Maintenance scheme, including the procurement and award of the construction contract; and
- (ii) the Assistant Director of Law and Governance be authorised to complete all necessary legal agreements, including those with Network Rail and Nexus, in order to give effect to the above.

Proposed Lowering of the Age of Admission at Thorney Close Primary School

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to request approval for the commencement of statutory processes required to lower the age of admission at Thorney Close Primary School.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Farthing highlighted that the report proposed the commencement of the necessary statutory processes needed to lower the age of admission at Thorney Close Primary School from 3 years of age to 2 years of age. She reported that the school's current nursery offer was currently only available to children aged 3 and above. She advised that parents of 2-year-old children who might either want to access a funded nursery place or to pay for one could not do so at the school. This meant that if a parent had a child already in attendance at the school and a child who would be entitled to a free 2-year-old nursery place they would need to send the children to different settings.

Cabinet Members were advised that the Council was also mindful of current volatility in the local early years sector. A nursery provision in a school was long term, sustainable way to deliver early years provision. Allowing younger children to attend the nursery at Thorney Close Primary School would ensure that parents would have a greater chance of being able to access this type of provision over the long term. Finally, some parents and carers preferred that their children attend one single setting from the time they join a nursery to the time their children leave primary school. This proposal would enable parents and carers who would like their children to eventually access primary provision at Thorney Close Primary to enrol their children from the age of 2.

Councillor Farthing reported that should the proposal be implemented at the end of the consultation period it was proposed that the first admission to the provision would be in January 2023. She explained that therefore the provision would be well established by the time the school moved into its new school building in 2025.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

12. RESOLVED that the Director of Children's Services be authorised to commence pre-publication consultation and, subject to the outcome of that process, publish a statutory notice to lower the age range of Thorney Close Primary School from 3 – 11 years of age to 2 – 11 years of age with effect from 1st January 2023.

Youth engagement across the city: response to Council resolution

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) on the current arrangements for formal consultation and engagement with children and young people across the city in response to the Council resolution.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Farthing highlighted that the report explained the proposed approach to ensuring children's engagement and consultation informs the Council's decision making. She explained that the report outlined the range of groups that existed on certain subjects and explained how they related to the themes in the City Plan, and also demonstrated how children were engaged in democratic activity across the city.

Cabinet Members were advised that the details included in the report clearly indicated a plethora of opportunities existing for children to raise their voices, but also recognised the absence of formal management of their feedback and contributions. It suggested a remedy to this by recommending a reporting approach for capturing feedback from consultation activity on the issues of the day which would ensure the Council had a greater understanding of the views of young people.

Cabinet Members having been recommended to agree the suggested approach for receiving consultation feedback from children and young people, it was:-

13. RESOLVED that the approach outline in the report for the Council to engage and consult with children and young people be approved.

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

At the instance of the Chairman, it was: -

14. 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.