

At a Meeting of the **CABINET** held in **CITY HALL (COMMITTEE ROOM 1)** on **THURSDAY 10 NOVEMBER 2022** at **10.00a.m.**

**Present:-**

Councillor G. Miller in the Chair

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

**Also present:-**

Councillors F. Miller and J. Price – Deputy Cabinet Members  
Councillor Edgeworth

Prior to the commencement of the business of the meeting, the Chair welcomed the public and press attending the meeting.

**Part I**

**Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 13 October 2022, Part I (copy circulated) were submitted.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 13 October 2022, Part I, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

**Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**Apologies for Absence**

An apology for absence was submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors I. Scott and P. Walker.

## **Response from Scrutiny Coordinating Committee – 13 October 2022 – Second Revenue Budget Review 2022/2023**

The Assistant Director of Law and Governance submitted a report (copy circulated) to advise of the comments of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee on a report of the Assistant Director of Finance that detailed the outcome of the Second Revenue Budget Review 2022/2023.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Stewart highlighted that the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee received the report of the Assistant Director of Finance on the Second Review Budget Review for 2022/2023, at its meeting on 13 October 2022. He was pleased to report that the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee acknowledged the information contained in the report including the various financial pressures and challenges that faced the local authority. He added that the Committee also noted the information on the General Fund Balances, Review of Existing Reserves and the Collection Fund.

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

2. RESOLVED that the comments of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee be noted.

## **Response from Scrutiny Coordinating Committee – 13 October 2022 – Budget Planning Framework and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2023/2024 - 2026/2027**

The Assistant Director of Law and Governance submitted a report (copy circulated) to advise of the comments of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee on a report of the Assistant Director of Finance that detailed the outcome of the Budget Planning Framework and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2023/2024 to 2026/2027.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Stewart highlighted that the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee received the report of the Assistant Director of Finance on the Budget Planning Framework and Medium-Term Financial Strategy for 2023/2024 – 2026/2027, at its meeting on 13 October 2022. He was pleased to report that the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee accepted the report whilst recognising the importance of increased engagement with the public and key stakeholders around budget consultation. He added that the Committee also acknowledged that there remained a number of uncertainties, challenges and pressures in respect of the budget and would continue to monitor this through future budget reports submitted to the Committee.

Councillor Farthing enquired whether the recent economic turmoil had settled and if the Council was benefitting from increased interest rates on deposits. The Assistant Director of Finance reported that the markets had settled slightly and would depend on the Chancellor of the Exchequer's impending Autumn Statement. He explained that the detail of the position would be known once the Council had received its Local Government Financial Settlement. He added that the Council had generated higher returns of 5.1% on some investments which would help with the revenue position however the rising interest rates remained a concern particularly for residents in the city.

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

3. RESOLVED that the comments of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee be noted.

### **Cabinet/Scrutiny Protocol**

The Assistant Director of Law and Governance submitted a report (copy circulated) to present the findings of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee's working group around the development of a Cabinet/Scrutiny Protocol.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Stewart highlighted that the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny had conducted an independent review of scrutiny arrangements in Sunderland and formulated a number of recommendations that were provided in their report. He reported that one of those recommendations was around strengthening the relationship between Cabinet and Scrutiny through the development of a Cabinet/Scrutiny Protocol.

Cabinet Members were advised that the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee established a task and finish working group to develop such a protocol for use in this Council. The terms of reference were clearly outlined in the report along with the methodology for drafting the protocol. The working group looked at a number of examples from other local authorities as part of their research. Cabinet Members, including Councillors Rowntree and Stewart, were involved in this piece of work, providing useful feedback to the working group.

Councillor Stewart reported that the draft Cabinet/Scrutiny Protocol was a comprehensive document that covered a range of key issues relating to the relationship between Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees. He explained that some of the key areas covered included around relationships, attendance and expectations, pre-meetings and managing disagreements. He commented that importantly, the protocol was about Cabinet and Scrutiny working together under an ethos of mutual respect and constructive challenge that would enhance the work of both.

Councillor Farthing commended the proposal for a protocol as it would give Cabinet and Scrutiny the opportunity to work more closely together and learn by comparing and contrasting their work with other authorities. She commented that she had liaised with the Chair of the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee to hold regular, beneficial meetings as during the pandemic such meetings had been held in abeyance.

Councillor Williams welcomed the direct interaction with Scrutiny especially for her diverse portfolio. She added that this would bring back the former 'open door' arrangement they had at the Civic Centre and it was important that Scrutiny held the Executive to account with open and honest discussions on strategic issues.

The Chair and Councillor Rowntree agreed that the Protocol would enable improved policy decision making by working collaboratively for the betterment of the city.

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

4. RESOLVED that the draft Cabinet/Scrutiny Protocol be approved as set out in Appendix 1 of the Report.

### **Review of Council Size and Ward Boundaries**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to advise that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (the Commission) had contacted the Council to indicate that it intended to carry out a Statutory Electoral Review of the overall composition of the Council and Ward arrangements.

This report recommended to Council the process to be adopted in relation to the completion of the Council's submission in relation to Council Size. Further reports to Council in relation to ward arrangements would be submitted in due course at the appropriate time.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Stewart highlighted that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (the Commission) had contacted the Council to indicate that it intended to carry out a review of the overall composition of the Council and Ward arrangements. He reported that the previous review was undertaken in 2002, with the final recommendations being published in October 2003, and whole-Council elections taking place in 2004.

Cabinet Members were advised that the purpose of the review was to ensure electoral equality across the City's wards, i.e. that they had a proportionate number of electors per ward with the right number of elected members. The Commission had indicated that final recommendations from this review would be published in February 2024, with a Parliamentary Order laid in Spring 2024, following which "all out" elections would then be held in May 2026.

Councillor Stewart advised that the report recommended to Council the process to be adopted in relation to the completion of the Council's submission in relation to Council Size. He drew particular attention to the proposal to establish a politically balanced seven-member Boundary Review Working Group and the terms of reference of this Working Group were set out at Appendix 1. He added that the report also sought to authorise the Chief Executive to draft the Council Size Proposal Documents, in consultation with the Boundary Review Working Group and to submit it for approval to the Council Meeting to be held on 25 January 2023 prior to its submission to the Commission by 28 February 2023.

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

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

- (i) the commencement of the review of the overall composition of the Council and its Ward arrangements by the Commission be noted;

- (ii) the timetable for the review process and the date for the submission of the Council size proposal, in particular, be noted;
- (iii) a politically balanced Boundary Review Working Group be established of seven members of the Council to assist in the process of developing initially the Council Size Proposal document;
- (iv) the terms of reference for the Boundary Review Working Group, as set out in Appendix 1, be approved;
- (v) the Chief Executive be authorised to draft the Council Size Proposal document in consultation with the Working Group and submit it for approval to the Council Meeting on 25 January 2023 prior to its submission to the Commission by 28 February 2023; and
- (vi) further reports will be submitted to Council as the review by the Commission progresses to consider the Ward arrangements.

#### **Energy Company Obligation 4 Flexible Energy (ECO 4 Flex) Scheme: Statement of Intent**

The Executive Director of City Development submitted a report (copy circulated) to seek approval to the proposed ECO 4 Flex Criteria (as detailed in the Statement of Intent) and to agree to the appointment of approved energy suppliers to take forward delivery of the scheme within Sunderland.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Rowntree highlighted that the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) was a government energy efficiency scheme to help reduce carbon emissions and tackle fuel poverty, and was managed by Ofgem. She explained that ECO had been reviewed on an ongoing basis since its launch in January 2013 and the latest scheme was ECO4. This would continue until March 2026 to a total value of £4 billion (delivered as a phased scheme of £1 billion annually).

Cabinet Members were advised that in order for households within Sunderland to be able to access ECO 4 Flexible support, the Council was required to publish an on-line Statement Of Intent (known as an SOI), which was required to be lodged with Ofgem. The SOI was attached at Appendix 1 and set out the proposed local ECO Flex 4 criteria and approval of the SOI for publication would allow those eligible households within the city to access fully funded improvements to their property through the scheme.

Councillor Rowntree having reported that the Council proposed to undertake a procurement exercise to appoint approved ECO4 obligated energy suppliers to take forward delivery within Sunderland, it was:-

#### **6. RESOLVED that:-**

- (i) the draft Statement of Intent (SOI) for delivery of ECO 4 Flex in Sunderland, and its publication, be approved;

- (ii) the Executive Director of City Development, in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, be authorised to appoint approved energy suppliers to take forward delivery of the scheme; and
- (iii) the Executive Director of City Development, in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, be authorised to make changes to the SOI such as those that may be required by Ofgem including as a result of changes to government policy or guidance.

## **Low Carbon Annual Report 2021/22**

The Executive Director of City Development submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide an overview of the Low Carbon Annual Report 2021/22 including the Council's emissions for 2021/22 and the city-wide emissions for 2020.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Rowntree emphasised that climate change represented a significant challenge for our generation. She reported that in March 2019, Sunderland City Council acknowledged the scale of this challenge by declaring a Climate Emergency at its Council meeting, recognising the immediate action required. She advised that a partnership board, known as the 2030 Shadow Board, was set up which met on a quarterly basis, bringing together representatives from across the city to drive forward Sunderland's ambitions and commitment to tackling climate change.

Cabinet Members were reminded that in January 2021, the Cabinet endorsed the Sunderland Low Carbon Framework and in July 2022, the Council published an updated Low Carbon Action Plan as work towards the Council's ambitious target to become carbon neutral as an organisation by 2030.

Councillor Rowntree reported that this Low Carbon Annual Report provided an estimation for the annual Green House Gas emissions for the Council in 2021/22 (against the base year of 2017/18), as well as citywide carbon emissions for Sunderland in the 2020 calendar year (the latest for which city-wide data was now available). She explained that it outlined that the Council's scope 1 and 2 carbon footprint during 2021/22 was 7,498 tonnes of Carbon Dioxide equivalent (known as CO<sub>2</sub>e), representing a 12.4% reduction from 2020/21 emissions. She added that although currently it was not mandatory to report on scope 3 emissions, they were also included as good practice, and work was ongoing on continue to build on the Council's scope 3 inventory. Estimates for 2021/22 showed that Scope 3 emissions equated to 84% of the Council's overall emissions.

Cabinet Members were advised that the report also set out figures published by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) for city-wide emissions. These indicated that total carbon emissions for Sunderland in 2020 were 1,039,057 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e. This represented a reduction of 11.5% on 2019 emissions. Against the science-based interim target set by the Tyndall Centre, city-wide emissions were reduced by 26.1% over the five year period from 2015-2020, which exceeded the target for a 16.1% reduction over this period.

Councillor Rowntree drew attention to a new dataset published by BEIS, available for current and previous years, which outlined city-wide carbon emissions within the scope of influence of local authorities. She explained that this would be used for city-wide emissions monitoring and reporting moving forward. She advised that although this new data set had shown overall city-wide carbon emissions in 2020 had reduced slightly more, by 11.3% on 2019 levels instead of 11.5%, the overall level of reduction over the five year period from 2015 to 2020 remained the same at 26.1%. She added that a range of activity had been taken forward across each of the seven strategic priority areas set out in the city-wide Low Carbon Framework and the Council's Action Plan and this was also summarised in the report.

Councillor Edgeworth, who was observing the meeting, requested that consideration be given to the provision of electric vehicle charging points for residents who only had access to communal parking bays and enquired if the Council had a strategy in place for zero carbon as a shareholder of the Newcastle International Airport.

Cabinet Members referred to the electric vehicle charging points issue raised by Councillor Edgeworth and commented that this was a common question raised by residents across the whole of the city. Councillors Rowntree and Stewart advised that they were aware of the matter and would be examining it further.

The Chief Executive assured Members that the Newcastle International Airport had its own, clear strategy for zero carbon in place and was working with its shareholders on that policy. Councillor Stewart added that many airlines also had schemes in place to offset carbon emissions.

Councillor Farthing suggested that the low carbon initiative be promoted in the city's schools with young people. She also suggested that discussions could take place with Gentoo in relation to electric vehicle charging points, rainwater catchment and composting as well as engaging with local communities.

Councillor Stewart highlighted that the report acted as a reminder of the commitment of the city to be carbon neutral and how difficult it was going to be to achieve that. He emphasised that total carbon emissions for Sunderland in 2020 were 1,039,057 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e and the target for 2023 to 2028 was to half that figure and then half it again by 2033. He added that the city would look very different in ten years' time.

Councillor Rowntree reported that it was important to recognise how far the Council and the city had come since it declared the climate emergency. She advised that it had been difficult to put the practicalities into place but with the passion and the commitment of officers working with Cabinet, Sunderland had become one of the UK100 network of authorities taking action towards net zero, leading the way in the UK and being recognised globally for advancement of carbon reductions.

The Chair commented that the report being on the agenda today was very timely as nations were meeting as part of the COP27 Climate Change Conference. He reported that for too long many countries had been dodging their responsibilities and was pleased that the UK and the city were leading the way. He agreed that the report and the achievements of the city were excellent but was mindful of the challenges that lay ahead.

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

7. RESOLVED that the Low Carbon Annual Report 2021/22 (Appendix 1) be noted and its publication on the MySunderland webpages be approved.

### **Procurement of a Healthwatch Sunderland Service**

The Director of Adult Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to seek approval to procure a local Healthwatch Sunderland service to be the local, independent consumer champion for Health and Social Care.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Chequer highlighted that the current contract for Healthwatch Sunderland was due to end and the Council had a statutory duty under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (as amended by the Health and Social Care Act 2012) to commission a local Healthwatch service. She advised that the proposed commissioning intentions should enable the Council to fulfil its statutory duty.

Councillor Chequer reported that the contract would be place for up to 6 years and the value would exceed £500,000.

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

8. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the procurement of a local Healthwatch service be approved; and
- (ii) the Director of Adult Services, in consultation with the Healthy City Portfolio Holder, be authorised to procure and subsequently award a contract for a local Healthwatch Sunderland service.

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

At the instance of the Chairman, it was: -

9. 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.

