

Cabinet (Education)
8 September 2020

8 September 2020 - At a Virtual Meeting of the Cabinet (Education) of North Ayrshire Council at 2.30 p.m.

Present

Joe Cullinane, John Bell, Robert Foster, Alex Gallagher, Louise McPhater and Jim Montgomerie; and Jackie MacKenzie (Teaching Representative) and Babs Mowat (Church Representative) (Agenda Items 1-4).

In Attendance

C. Hatton, Chief Executive; M. Boyd, Head of Service, D. Forbes, Senior Manager (Financial Services) (Financial & Customer Services); T. Reaney, Head of Service (Recovery and Renewal); F. Walker, Head of Service, M. Lindsay, Senior Customer Officer (ICT) (People and ICT); R. McCutcheon, Executive Director, C. McAuley, Head of Service (Economic Development and Regeneration), D. Hammond, Head of Service (Commercial), J. Miller, Senior Manager (Planning) and J. Cameron, Senior Manager (Housing Strategy and CS) (Place); A. Sutton, Executive Director (Interim), C. Amos Head of Service (Education), A. McClelland, Head of Service (Education) and R. Arthur, Head of Service (Connected Communities) (Communities); C. Cameron, Head of Service (HSCP Finance & Transformation); and A. Fraser, Head of Service, M. McColm, Senior Manager (Communications), M. Sugden, Communications Officer, M. Anderson, Senior Manager (Committee and Member Services) and, E. Gray and A. Little, Committee Services Officers (Democratic Services).

Chair

Joe Cullinane in the Chair.

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest by Members in terms of Standing Order 10 and Section 5 of the Code of Conduct for Councillors.

2. Minutes

The accuracy of the Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Cabinet held on 30 June 2020 was confirmed and the Minutes authorised to be signed in accordance with Paragraph 7 (1) of Schedule 7 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

3. Education Restart Update

Received a presentation by the Head of Education on the resumption of Education provision in North Ayrshire.

Members were provided with an update on:

- the key areas of focus – Wellbeing, Nurturing North Ayrshire, Literacy and Numeracy, and The New Normal;
- the role of the Education Recovery Board and the work which has been undertaken since its formation;
- the importance of partnership working and the parties involved in this;
- contingency planning and the response to the two positive cases recently detected in North Ayrshire school pupils;
- the most up-to-date Scottish Government advice and the ongoing working relationship with Public Health;
- the importance of strong communication with parents and examples of this; and
- anticipated challenges, including future exam diets, Scottish Government data collection, local outbreaks and resourcing.

Members expressed their thanks to all staff and pupils who had helped allow education in schools to resume. They asked questions and were provided with further information in relation to:

- digital inclusion and the distribution of the additional laptops, tablets and the procurement of WiFi hotspot services;
- the process for continuing digital learning should local outbreaks occur; and
- the impact of the pandemic on the mental wellbeing of teachers, whether any concerns had been identified and how staff were being supported.

Noted.

4. SQA Exam Results Process

Submitted a report by the Executive Director (Communities) on the SQA results in North Ayrshire in 2020 and to provide an update on current and future developments in relation to qualifications.

Members asked questions and were provided with further information in relation to:

- the percentage of North Ayrshire pupils from the most deprived areas who were downgraded compared with those from the most affluent;
- plans for the exam diet for the 2020/21 academic year and any proposed changes by the SQA; and
- whether a similar analysis would be provided for the 2020/21 exam results and the difficulties there would be when drawing comparisons between the data.

The Cabinet unanimously agreed to (a) note the report; and (b) receive a further, more detailed attainment analysis later in the year, following the publication of Insight and LGBF benchmarking data.

5. Emergency Governance Decisions

Submitted a report by the Head of Democratic Services on decisions taken by the Chief Executive in terms of the Emergency Governance (Covid-19) arrangements. A summary of the decisions taken by the Chief Executive was set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

Noted.

6. Council Plan Progress Update – Quarter Four 2019/20

Submitted a report by the Head of Democratic Services on performance against the Council Plan 2019-24 as at Quarter Four 2019/20. The year end progress update was set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

The Cabinet unanimously agreed to (a) approve the performance of the Council Plan as at 31st March 2020; and (b) submit the report and appendices to Audit and Scrutiny Committee for consideration at the next available meeting.

7. Recovery and Renewal Strategy

Submitted a report by the Head of Recovery and Renewal on the proposed North Ayrshire Council Recovery and Renewal Strategy. The proposed strategy was set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

Members praised the Council's response to Covid-19 and stressed the importance of continuing the close work with communities and trade unions to aid the recovery.

The Cabinet unanimously agreed to (a) note (i) the work done alongside our communities to respond to Covid-19; and (ii) that plans were in place to Recover services where safe to do so and in line with Government guidelines; and (b) approve the Recovery and Renewal Strategy to build back a better North Ayrshire.

8. Covid-19 Financial Recovery Plan 2020/21

Submitted a report by the Head of Financial and Customer Services on the projected financial impact of Covid-19 and the recovery options to return a balanced budget in 2020/21. A Covid-19 Cost Impact Projection to 31 March 2021 was set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

Members asked questions and were provided with further information in relation to:

- the impact of Covid-19 on the 2021/22 budget setting process which, under normal circumstances, would begin in September; and
- the additional teachers hired, whether these appointments were one year only and the budget implications if they were required for a longer period.

The Cabinet unanimously agreed to (a) approve (i) additional cashflow management support to North Ayrshire Leisure Ltd of up to £2.743m to ensure they continued to operate as a going concern and meet their cash liabilities and (ii) a charge, in line with Audit Scotland Guidance, from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account on a fair and reasonable basis for Building Services costs incurred through the period impacted by the lockdown, estimated up to £2.000m; and (b) note (i) the cost impact of COVID-19 to March 2021 based on current projections and assumptions; (ii) the measures to address the cost impact as part of a Recovery Plan to return a balanced budget for 2020/21; and (iii) further areas of cost risk, including the financial projection of the HSCP.

9. Revenue Budget 2020/21: Financial Performance to 30 June 2020

Submitted a report by the Head of Financial and Customer Services on the financial performance for the Council at 30 June 2020. Budget reports for each service and the Housing Revenue Account were set out at Appendices 1-7 of the report, a summary of virement/budget adjustment requests at Appendix 8 and an overview of the IJB's financial performance as at Period 3 at Appendix 9.

The Cabinet unanimously agreed to (a) note (i) the information and financial projections outlined in the report; and (ii) the current financial projection for the Health and Social Care Partnership at 2.7 of the report; and (b) approve the virements detailed in Appendix 8 to the report.

10. Capital Programme Performance to 31 March 2021

Submitted a report by the Head of Financial and Customer Services on the progress in delivering the Capital Investment Programme for 2020/21. The detailed Capital Investment Programme was set out at Appendix 1 to the report and the HRA Capital Statement at Appendix 2.

The Cabinet unanimously agreed to (a) approve the revisions to budgets outlined in the report; and (b) note (i) the General Services and HRA revised budgets at 30 June 2020; and (ii) the forecast expenditure to 31 March 2021.

11. Covid-19 Economic Recovery and Renewal Approach

Submitted a report by the Executive Director (Place) on the proposed approach to Covid-19 economic recovery in North Ayrshire. The Local Economic Recovery and Renewal Approach document was set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

Members praised the proposed approach taken and the focus on Community Wealth Building. They asked questions and received further information in relation to the use of the Community Investment Fund to help the local economy recover and the expected development opportunities around the sub-sea cable project.

The Cabinet unanimously agreed to (a) note (i) the Council's ongoing response to support the local economy; and (ii) the alignment between Covid-19 economic recovery and renewal planning, the Financial Recovery Plan, Capital Programme refresh and Construction Programme Impact; and (b) approve the proposed Local Economic Recovery and Renewal Approach.

12. Better Off North Ayrshire Update

Submitted a report by the Executive Director (Place) on the latest performance and financial position of the Better Off North Ayrshire programme.

The Cabinet unanimously agreed to (a) note (i) the end of the Better Off North Ayrshire programme and its achievements; (ii) the progress made in the past year to increase income from claims; (iii) the remaining anticipated funding gap from the conclusion of the claims process which is almost complete; and (b) approve the agreed position with the National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF), whereby remaining funding gap of circa £706,200 will be fully reimbursed by NLCF.

13. Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy

Submitted a report by the Executive Director (Place) on the Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy for Ayrshire, prepared jointly by North, East and South Ayrshire Councils. The proposed strategy was set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

The Cabinet unanimously agreed to (a) approve the Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy for Ayrshire; and (b) delegate authority to the Executive Director (Place) to make any final changes ahead of submission to the Scottish Government.

14. Millport Coastal Flood Protection Scheme: Preliminary Scheme Confirmation

Submitted a report by the Executive Director (Place) on the formal Scheme Notification consultation, objections received, and proposed next steps in terms of the Millport Flood Protection Scheme. The five objections received were set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

The Cabinet, having had regard to the report and the objections, unanimously agreed to approve the proposed Millport Coastal Flood Protection Scheme without modification.

15. Affordable Housing Account Funding Request

Submitted a report by the Executive Director (Place) seeking approval to allocate funding to Cunninghame Housing Association from the Affordable Housing Account.

The Cabinet unanimously agreed to approve the allocation of £0.175m funding from the Affordable Housing Account to Cunninghame Housing Association to assist with the provision of new social housing at Balnagowan, Skelmorlie and Glebe Place, Saltcoats.

16. Community Investment Fund

Submitted a report by the Executive Director (Communities) seeking approval to apply flexibility to Community Investment Fund (CIF) projects and timescales due to restrictions imposed on current activities by Covid-19.

Members asked questions and were provided with further information in relation to a number of CIF projects including additional funding options which have been sought for the Millport Town Hall.

The Cabinet unanimously agreed to (a) note the current awards; (b) extend the deadline of the conditional award to Millport Town Hall until August 2021; and (c) remit Locality Officers to work with organisations in receipt of CIF funding to agree revised timescales and delivery models, with updates provided to Locality Partnerships and to Cabinet.

17. Award of Contract for a Repair and Maintenance of Heating, Ventilation and Air-conditioning Units Service

Submitted a report by the Head of Financial and Customer Services on the result of the tendering exercise for a Repair and Maintenance of Heating, Ventilation and Air-conditioning Units service.

The Cabinet unanimously agreed to approve the award of the contract to BAM (Facilities Management) Limited.

The Meeting ended at 5.10 p.m.