

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

CRAMLINGTON, BEDLINGTON AND SEATON VALLEY LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **Cramlington, Bedlington and Seaton Valley Local Area Council** held in Netherton Social Club, 1a Netherton Lane, Bedlington, Northumberland, NE22 6DP on Wednesday, 23 January 2019 at 6:05 pm.

PRESENT

Councillor C Dunbar
(Chair, in the Chair)

MEMBERS

W Crosby
W Daley
S Dungworth
B Flux

B Pidcock
M D Swinburn
I C F Swithenbank
R J Wallace

OFFICERS

H Bowers
M Carle
T Gribbin

D Lally
P Soderquest

A Ward

Democratic Services Officer
Highways Delivery Area Manager
Neighbourhood Services Area
Manager
Chief Executive
Head of Housing & Public
Protection
Communication Lead

ALSO PRESENT

Cllr P Jackson, Leader of the Council
Cllr N Oliver, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services

Public: 5

67. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hepple, Richards and Robinson.

68. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Cramlington, Bedlington and Seaton Valley Local Area Council held on Wednesday, 19 December, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

69. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Keith Dalton, Bedlington resident referred to the size of the agenda and asked if consideration could be given to the number of agenda items in order to attract the general public and members of specific groups/forums.

The Chair stated that this would be taken forward to the Local Area Council Chairs' Briefing.

Adam Hogg, West Bedlington Town Council queried why the speed limit from the Co-op to the Red Lion could not be reduced when this had been allowed to be done on Station Road in Cramlington. In response the Chair stated that the speed limit in Cramlington had been reduced due to the perseverance of the Ward Councillor. She also explained that a lot of feedback had been received regarding the high volume of traffic and because of the congestion, a safety zone had been created.

Councillor Dungworth stated this was a wider issue in the county and requested a highways officer attend a future LAC meeting to explain the system. Mr Hogg requested any information be passed on to the Town and Parish Councils.

70. PETITIONS

This item was to:

- (a) **Receive any new petitions:** there were no new petitions to consider.
- (b) **Consider reports on petitions previously received:** there were no reports to consider.
- (c) **Receive any updates on petitions for which a report was previously considered:** there were no updates to consider.

71. LOCAL SERVICES ISSUES

Members received a verbal update from the Area Managers from Technical Services and Neighbourhood Services in attendance about any key recent, ongoing and/or future planned Local Services work for the attention of members of the Local Area Council, who then had the opportunity to raise issues with the Area Managers.

Neighbourhood Services update:

Tony Gribbin, Neighbourhood Services Area Manager, reported that the grounds maintenance winter plan was going well due to the relatively mild start to winter and was expected to be completed in full across all areas. A consultation had just finished for annualised hours which would reconfigure the grass cutting schemes. Comments were being evaluated and an update would be brought back to the next meeting.

Following the Christmas period, there had been a 15% increase in waste. Engagement had gone really well and there had been no complaints about collection services.

In response to a query regarding the annualised hours, it was stated that work should be able to be maintained throughout the summer with increased hours worked in the summer season and reduced hours in the winter season. Trade Unions had been involved with the consultation with positive comments.

Technical Services update:

Michael Carle, Area Manager Highways Delivery, said winter services were continuing.

Two new 68 plate gritters had been purchased for South East Northumberland and work on the salt barn at Cowley Road Depot, Blyth had commenced in early January.

Plans were being made for additional funding received from Central Government and £970,000 in total would be spent on the following schemes:

Carriageway maintenance on Clayton Street, Bower Grange and Alexandra Terrace, Bedlington.

In response to a comment regarding the new gritters, Mr Carle advised that a single manned gritter was more advantageous as the driver would have 360° vision.

72. REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PLACE

Medium Term Financial Plan 2019-22 and Budget 2019-20

Councillor P Jackson, Leader of the Council and Councillor N Oliver, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services were in attendance to give a presentation outlining the Council's strategy to its Medium Term Financial Plan and Budget 2019/20. The presentation provided details of the approach to setting the budget for the next financial year and the broad impact this would have on the delivery of services. (A copy of the presentation is filed with the signed minutes.)

Councillor Oliver said the Council was facing difficult financial times but the administration was confident that over the next 2 ½ years it would be able to deliver the services needed to protect front line services and improve prospects for the residents of the county.

The presentation covered the following areas:-

- The context of the plan in relation to savings, reduction of debt, the capital programme and increasing demand for services
- An analysis of funding over the years 2014 to 2022
- Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement
- Proposal to increase Council Tax by 2.99%, which was not an easy decision but necessary
- Additional funding available in Northumberland from extra Rural Services Delivery Grant, Rate Retention Levy Surplus and Social Care Funding
- Savings by Directorate 2019-22
- Summary of savings and movement of debt (total borrowing from March 2013 to December 2018)
- Capital Programme 2019-2022 - the most ambitious the county had ever seen, covering the themes of the Corporate Plan; Living, Enjoying, Connecting, Learning and Thriving.
- The new Northumberland railway line and access to jobs
- The success of the North of Tyne Combined Authority would see £600 million being invested in the region over the next 30 years. This could make a difference to people's lives and the Borderlands Growth Deal could act as a catalyst for further investment.
- The budget position was challenging but it was hoped to maintain local services and inspire confidence to residents that they lived in one of the best counties in the country.
- The next steps were:-
 - invite views from the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Local Area Councils
 - Final version to be considered by Council in February 2019 alongside the Medium Term Finance Plan 2019-22.

Questions and comments included the following:

- The works on the Northumberland railway line had been started by the previous administration
- There had been no mention of Seaton Valley. In response it was stated that a new station was proposed in Seaton Valley as part of the new Northumberland railway line and also investment in schools
- How would the savings be made and what services would no longer be available? Councillor Oliver stated that savings would come from about one third of increased income and savings from front line services that would have the least effect on vulnerable people. In addition, capital investment would enable more efficient services by delivering services closer to where people lived

- Increased income meant increased prices which residents would have to pay
- A member raised the concern of austerity and the reduction in benefits. It was stated that there were no plans for benefit cuts but some people who were currently paying no council tax would be asked to pay 8% of the council tax due on their property, ie, they would still receive 92% discount. This had already been implemented in Sunderland and Newcastle and there was benchmarking evidence regarding the collection rate of 83%.
- In response to a query regarding 3 year savings target, Councillor Oliver advised that it included an inflation element
- When Arch was first first set there had been talk about an income coming from the funds and assets it would have and safeguard services from cuts, so would Advance Northumberland be paying any profits back to the Council to protect local services, etc? Councillor Oliver stated that third party loans had been raised at the Audit Committee and said that loans were for genuine projects and to create community benefits
- The new housing programme scheme was welcomed and it was hoped that would begin with sites already being given permission or brownfield sites and not out of town or greenfield sites. Councillor Jackson stated that the buildings would be where they were needed as part of a county wide programme and would not be built on greenfield sites
- In response to a concern regarding out of town parking facilities for the new railway line it was advised that detailed planning had not yet been done but would be considered as as a regional priority in the transport plans
- How much of the £5.5 million business rates would Northumberland see? Councillor Oliver stated that an element that had been identified but not yet determined
- There was still £11.6 million savings to be found. When would this be? Councillor Jackson stated that the Combined Authority had identified some programmes, eg, Blyth Training Academy, Rural Growth Policy and investment in Stem education. The savings from business rates would come back to the general North of Tyne pot and allocated accordingly
- Councillor Daley, Portfolio holder for Children's Services advised of a recent review process of Youth Services. Northumberland would retain Youth Services, specifically focusing on challenging areas such as Blyth and Ashington. The Medium Term Financial Plan would have a positive effect on the county. Northumberland had recently won the National Tourism Award which was something to be proud of. There were issues and challenges for young people who needed to be inspired.
- A member queried when the building of the car park at Westmorland Way would begin. Councillor Jackson confirm that this would be in the spring or summer.

RESOLVED that the presentation be received and comments noted.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

73. MEMBERS' LOCAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES 2018/19

Members received a progress report. (Copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix A.)

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

74. LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME

Members received the latest version of agreed items for future Local Area Council meetings (any suggestions for new agenda items would require confirmation by the Business Chair after the meeting) (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix B)

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

75. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday, 18 February, Concordia, Cramlington.

The meeting closed at 7:35 pm.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____