

EXECUTIVE

MONDAY 8 MARCH 2021 AT 4.00 PM

PRESENT:

Councillor J Mallinson (Leader / Chair) until 4.10 pm
Councillor Ellis (Deputy Leader, and Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder)
Councillor Christian (Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder)
Councillor Higgs (Culture, Heritage and Leisure Portfolio Holder)
Councillor Mrs Mallinson (Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder) until 4.10 pm
Councillor Nedved (Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder)

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillor Mrs Finlayson, Vice-Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel
Councillor Meller, Vice-Chair of the Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel

OFFICERS:

Town Clerk and Chief Executive
Deputy Chief Executive
Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services
Corporate Director of Finance and Resources
Corporate Director of Economic Development

WELCOME

The Leader welcomed all those present to the meeting.

REGISTER OF ATTENDANCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

A roll call of persons in attendance was taken.

Councillor Mrs Mallinson declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct in respect of Agenda item A.2 – Empty Property Grant Assistance. The interest related to the fact that Councillor Mrs Mallinson is a private landlord.

Councillor Mallinson (J) declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct in respect of Agenda item A.2 – Empty Property Grant Assistance. The interest related to the fact that Councillor Mallinson is a private landlord.

APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Bainbridge (Chair of the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel).

PUBLIC AND PRESS

In light of the above-mentioned declarations of interests, and to facilitate the smooth running of the meeting, the Leader moved that Agenda item A.2 – Empty Property Grant Assistance be taken as the last item of business; and it was:

RESOLVED – That the Agenda as varied be agreed.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The Leader moved and the Deputy Leader seconded that the Minutes of the meetings of the Executive held on 7 and 14 December 2020; and 13 January 2021 be confirmed as a true record of the meetings; which course of action was agreed. The Chair would sign the Minutes at the first practicable opportunity.

EX.30/21 CARLISLE PLAN 2021-2023 (Key Decision – KD.01/21)

Portfolio Leader

Relevant Scrutiny Panel Business and Transformation; Health and Wellbeing; and
Economic Growth

Subject Matter

The Leader submitted report PC.7/21 presenting the draft Carlisle Plan 2021-2023 which brought together an ambitious programme for Carlisle under two priorities, namely Economic Growth and Health and Wellbeing; together with a new vision focussing on prosperity as the primary purpose, prosperity being the most important determinant of health and wellbeing.

There was also an emphasis on maximising the co-benefits for cross-cutting issues such as Climate Change, the detail in relation to which would be highlighted within the reporting of the programme work.

The Leader then moved the recommendations, which were duly seconded by the Deputy Leader.

Summary of options rejected None

DECISION

That the Executive:

1. Had considered and commented on the draft Carlisle Plan 2021 – 2023 as appended to Report PC.7/21.
2. Referred the draft Carlisle Plan to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels for consultation.

Reasons for Decision

The commitment of investment in Carlisle and development of clear programmes and strategies now meant that it was an appropriate time to update the Carlisle Plan

EX.31/21 DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT UPDATE
(Key Decision – KD.03/21)

Portfolio Communities, Health and Wellbeing

Relevant Scrutiny Panel Health and Wellbeing

Subject Matter

The Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder submitted report GD.12/21 updating Members on the progress of allocations under the Disabled Facilities Grants in 2020/21. The report also requested the allocation of additional funds to the Additional Discretionary Assistance for Mandatory Grants to assist those mandatory DFG applications where the works required exceeded the available grant.

Details of the background position and proposals under consideration were provided at Sections 1 and 2.

The Portfolio Holder made mention of the very challenging nature of the past year resultant from the COVID-19 pandemic; and wished to place on record thanks to the Regulatory Services Manager and members of staff involved for their phenomenal and outstanding work during that period.

The Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder then moved the recommendations set out, which were seconded by the Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder.

Summary of options rejected that the increase to the 2020/21 capital programme, and proposal to replenish and reinforce the Additional Discretionary Assistance for Mandatory Grant should not be approved

DECISION

That the Executive:

1. Had considered and noted the progress of allocations under the Disabled Facilities Grants for 2020/21.
2. Approved an increase of £255,800 to the 2020/21 Capital Programme, fully financed by additional Disabled Facilities Grant funding received.
3. Approved the proposal to replenish and reinforce the Additional Discretionary Assistance for Mandatory Grant by £190,100.

Reasons for Decision

There was some uncertainty on how the DFG allocations for 2020/21 would be spent. The financial year started with a lock down that saw many contractors no longer operating and many homeowners not wanting to pursue works. Since the first lockdown applications had significantly increased and additional funds for DFGs had been provided by central Government. At the time of writing the report there was uncertainty as to how infection rates would affect the delivery of DFGs in the last quarter. The Additional Discretionary Assistance for Mandatory Grant had been well used by the County Council and the NHS taking pressures off their budgets. As the grant had been reduced by nearly one third it was sensible to replenish and reinforce that fund

EX.32/21 NOTICE OF EXECUTIVE KEY DECISIONS
(Non Key Decision)

Portfolio Cross-Cutting

Relevant Scrutiny Panel Health and Wellbeing; Economic Growth; Business and Transformation

Subject Matter

The Notice of Executive Key Decisions dated 5 February 2021 was submitted for information.

The Corporate Director of Economic Development had been scheduled to submit a report concerning the Carlisle Station Gateway – Phase 1 (Key Decision - KD.05/21) to this meeting. Discussions were ongoing and the matter was therefore deferred.

The Leader moved and the Deputy Leader seconded the paper.

Summary of options rejected None

DECISION

That, subject to the above, the Notice of Executive Key Decisions dated 5 February 2021 be received.

Reasons for Decision

Not applicable

EX.33/21 SCHEDULE OF DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE LEADER / PORTFOLIO HOLDERS
(Non Key Decision)

Portfolio Cross-cutting

Relevant Scrutiny Panel Economic Growth

Subject Matter

Details of decisions taken by the Leader / Portfolio Holders under delegated powers were submitted.

Summary of options rejected None

DECISION

That the decisions, attached as Appendix A, be noted.

Reasons for Decision

Not applicable

EX.34/21 SCHEDULE OF DECISIONS TAKEN BY OFFICERS
(Non Key Decision)

Portfolio Cross-cutting

Relevant Scrutiny Panel Health and Wellbeing; Economic Growth;
Business and Transformation

Subject Matter

Details of decisions taken by Officers under delegated powers were submitted.

Summary of options rejected None

DECISION

That the decisions, attached as Appendix B, be noted.

Reasons for Decision

Not applicable

EX.35/21 JOINT MANAGEMENT TEAM
(Non Key Decision)

Portfolio Cross-cutting

Relevant Scrutiny Panel Health and Wellbeing; Economic Growth;
Business and Transformation

Subject Matter

The Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Management Team held on 8 February 2021 were submitted for information.

Summary of options rejected None

DECISION

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Management Team held on 8 February 2021, attached as Appendix C, be received.

Reasons for Decision

Not applicable

EX.36/21 QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE REPORT 2020/21
(Non Key Decision)

Portfolio Finance, Governance and Resources

Relevant Scrutiny Panel Health and Wellbeing; Economic Growth; Business and
Transformation

Subject Matter

The Deputy Leader submitted report PC.17/21 containing the Quarter 3 performance against the current Service Standards, together with a summary of the Carlisle Plan 2016-19 actions as defined in the 'plan on a page'. Performance against the 2020/21 Key Performance Indicators was also included.

The Business and Transformation; Health and Wellbeing; and Economic Growth Scrutiny Panels had scrutinised performance at their meetings held on 18 February; 25 February; and 4 March 2021 respectively. Excerpts from the Minutes of those meetings (BTSP.19/21; HWSP.23/21; and EGSP.19/21) were also submitted.

The Chair of the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel had been invited to speak but was unable to attend the Executive today and had submitted his apologies.

Speaking at the invitation of the Leader, the Vice-Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel reported that Panel Members had been very impressed with the Council's use of social media, considering it to be a very useful resource for residents and businesses alike. The performance dashboard enabled one to easily see how the Council was responding to issues and outcomes, such as fly tipping, dog fouling, littering and waste recycling.

The increased service delivery by members of staff had been exceptional during the restrictions imposed as a result of the pandemic. That now included the appointment of a Food City Co-ordinator for a period of two years to ensure continuity of food hygiene inspections; the proportion of food hygiene inspections completed as scheduled to date being 100%.

The Vice-Chair further advised that a Task and Finish Group had been set up to consider the content of future performance reports. The Group had met twice and had compiled a draft report for consideration at the next meeting of the Group. A copy of the final report would be circulated to the individual Scrutiny Panels in due course.

The Vice-Chair of the Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel informed the Executive that he had nothing to add to the Minute Excerpt submitted.

In response, the Deputy Leader thanked the Vice-Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel for her report. Referencing the work being undertaken which related to the Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder's area of responsibility, he believed that the Council would emerge from lockdown with a very solid attitude to fly tipping and litter in the City.

The Leader added his thanks to those of the Deputy Leader for the Vice-Chairs' attendance at the meeting.

In conclusion, the Deputy Leader moved the recommendation which was seconded by the Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder.

Summary of options rejected none

DECISION

That the Executive had considered the performance of the City Council as presented in Report PC.17/21 with a view to seeking continuous improvement in how the Council delivered its priorities.

Reasons for Decision

To seek Executive's consideration of the performance of the City Council as presented in the report.

EX.37/21 EMPTY PROPERTY GRANT ASSISTANCE (Key Decision – KD.02/21)

Portfolio Economy, Enterprise and Housing

Relevant Scrutiny Panel Economic Growth

Subject Matter

Councillors Mallinson (J) (Leader / Chair) and Mrs Mallinson, having declared disclosable pecuniary interests, retired from the meeting prior to commencement of this item of business.

The Deputy Leader assumed the Chair.

The Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder submitted report GD.13/21 seeking Executive agreement to the use of capital funds which would ensure an extension to the Empty Property Grant. The report also requested an increase in the maximum possible Grant award from £3,000 to £5,000. The Grant supported the work of the City Council in bringing long term empty properties back into use.

The Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel had scrutinised the matter on 4 March 2021, resolving:

“That the Panel had considered the proposed extension and increase of the Empty Property Grant by the use of £109,433.00 Capital funds from 2012/13 which were presently unallocated.”

A copy of Minute Excerpt EGSP.18/21 setting out the Panel's observations had been circulated.

The Portfolio Holder wished to take this opportunity to thank the Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel for their scrutiny work. He also expressed thanks to the Regulatory Services Manager; Principal Health and Housing Officer; and the Empty Homes and Grants Officer for all of their work and for their attendance at the Panel meeting.

The Portfolio Holder added that the Empty Property Grant would build upon the success of the initiative which commenced in 2019. Appendix 1 provided an activity report for the initiative to date. Six empty properties were allocated £3,000, one £2,700 and one £2,500. Following the completed Grant works seven properties had been removed from Empty Homes list (including three very long-term properties 2005, 2010 and 2011). Works to one property were still pending.

There were still over 1,000 empty properties in the District, of which 225 had been vacant for more than two years. Empty properties could be a blight on neighbourhoods and could attract anti-social behaviour, as well as being a wasted resource. The City Council had and continued to offer support and advice to local homeowners in order to address the issue.

The Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder concluded his presentation by moving the recommendations as detailed on page 23 of the document pack.

In seconding the recommendations, the Culture, Heritage and Leisure Portfolio Holder added his thanks to the staff involved in what was obviously a very successful scheme. He looked forward to it being extended moving forward.

Speaking at the invitation of the Deputy Leader, the Vice-Chair of the Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel endorsed the Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder's comments. He suggested that it may be prudent to identify how much the Council had raised in excess rates charged on empty properties so that the authority was in a position to respond to any questions.

The Deputy Leader responded by thanking the Vice-Chair for his attendance. He also summarised the approach adopted by the Council in dealing with empty properties.

Summary of options rejected alternative options detailed within the report

DECISION

That the Executive:

1. Had considered and approved the proposed extension to the Empty Property Grant by agreeing to the use of £109,433.00 Capital funds from 2012/13 which are presently unallocated.
2. Approved a corresponding increase of £109,400 to the 2021/22 capital programme fully funded by external grant.
3. Increased the maximum Empty Property Grant offer to £5,000 and delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise and Housing to vary the terms of the proposed Grant should opportunities arise where are conducive to improved service delivery.

Reasons for Decision

The proposed Empty Property Grant provided owners of long-term empty homes with an option to progress improvements that would allow re-occupation of the properties. It was an alternative to the Council's formal options through the Enforced Sales Policy. The allocation of the £109,433.00 capital funds from 2012/13 would allow the continuation of the Grant and it could potentially support over 20 empty homeowners

[The meeting ended at 4.16 pm]