

Cabinet (Extraordinary Meeting)

23 February 2012

Present: Mrs L Arkley (Elected Mayor) (in the Chair),
Councillors Mrs G Barrie, EFJ Hodson, D Lilly,
Mrs P McIntyre, P Mason, LJ Miller and Mrs JA Wallace

CAB156/02/12 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor GC Westwater.

CAB157/02/12 Declarations of Interest

It was noted that those interests declared at the Council meetings held on 2 and 21 February 2012 applied to this meeting.

CAB158/02/12 2012-2015 Council Strategic Plan and Budget Setting Process : Consideration of any Objections to Cabinet's Proposals

A report was presented which outlined the next stage in the process for approving the 2012-2015 Council Strategic Plan, the 2012/13 General Fund Revenue Budget, Council Tax Requirement and Council Tax level, the Treasury Management Statement and Annual Investment Strategy for 2012/13 and the 2012-2022 Capital Plan (excluding Housing), which was required when Council had any objections to the Cabinet's proposals.

At its meeting held on 21 February 2012, Council had further considered the Budget and Council Strategic Plan proposals of the Cabinet. Objections to the proposals as detailed in Annex 1 to the report (Labour Group) and Annex 2 of the report (Liberal Democrat Group) had been submitted and Council had instructed the Mayor to reconsider her proposals in the light of the objections raised. The Mayor was now required to consult Cabinet prior to the next Council meeting that would take place on 1 March 2012. In considering the objections, Cabinet needed to have due regard to any professional advice of officers.

As part of the next stage in the budget process the Mayor had to consult with her Cabinet to determine whether to revise the Cabinet's proposals to take account of the objections and instructions agreed by the Council identifying reasons for such variations. Alternatively, to determine any disagreement to any objections and instructions agreed by the Council and identify the reasons for such disagreement. Following consultation with Cabinet, the Mayor would have to submit any revisions/disagreement to the meeting of Council on 1 March 2012. The decision taken by Council on 21 February 2012 would need to be reconsidered in the light of the Mayor's response.

The Mayor thanked both political groups for the work they had carried out in drawing up the objections and to officers for the support given. The Mayor took each Political Group objection in turn:

Labour Group (Annex 1 to the report)

Responding the Labour Group's objections, the Mayor stated that a number of them were undeliverable.

The Mayor made specific reference to the introduction of a 36 hour working week. To achieve this would mean a change to staff terms and conditions which could not be done without coming out of the national agreement, something the unions were unwilling to negotiate on.

The proposals to reduce capital spend had not, she felt, been thought through as they would not help boost the local economy.

The proposals had the potential to damage front-line services and to lose jobs, which could be protected by pursuing the proposed Business and Technical packages.

Liberal Democrat Group (Annex 2 to the report)

Responding to the Liberal Democrat Group's objections, the Mayor stated that, like those of the Labour Group, some of the proposals, for example relating to staff terms and conditions, were not deliverable.

Some of the proposals were not well thought through. The Mouth of the Tyne Festival was a showcase event for the Borough and brought huge benefits to the economy. Taking this away would be counter-productive. North Tyneside needed to be a vibrant place, with visitors feeling good about what they had seen and heard.

The objections put forward a narrow view, as evidenced by the suggestion that all capital spending should be concentrated on one part of the Borough. The Mayor stressed that the budget and spending was for the benefit of all residents across the whole of the Borough.

RESOLVED that (1) the guidance set out in the report be noted;
(2) the Labour Group objections be rejected, for the reasons set out above;
(3) the Liberal Democrat Group objections be rejected, for the reasons set out above.

Minutes published on Tuesday 28 February 2012.