



# Doncaster Council

## EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS DECISION RECORD

The following decisions were taken on Tuesday, 1st December, 2020 by Cabinet.

Date notified to all Members: Thursday, 3rd December, 2020.

End of the call-in period is 5.00 p.m. on Monday, 14th December, 2020. The decisions will not be implemented until after this date and time.

Present:

Chair - Mayor Ros Jones (Mayor of Doncaster with responsibility for Budget and Policy Framework)

Vice-Chair - Councillor Glyn Jones (Deputy Mayor, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Equalities)

### **Cabinet Member for:**

Councillor Nigel Ball	Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Leisure and Culture.
Councillor Rachael Blake	Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care.
Councillor Joe Blackham	Portfolio Holder for Highways, Street Scene and Trading Services.
Councillor Chris McGuinness	Portfolio Holder for Communities, Voluntary Sector and the Environment.
Councillor Bill Mordue	Portfolio Holder for Business, Skills and Economic Development.
Councillor Jane Nightingale	Portfolio Holder for Customer and Corporate Services.

Apologies:-

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Nuala Fennelly, Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Schools.

## **PUBLIC MEETING – SCHEDULE OF DECISIONS**

### Public Questions and Statements

There were no public statements submitted for the meeting.

Decision Record forms dated 17th November, 2020 (previously circulated), were noted.

## DECISION 1

### 1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE

6. Sheffield City Region Expansion of Doncaster Council Advance Programme.

### 2. DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet gave approval:-

- (1) for Doncaster Council to enter into a funding agreement with the Department for Work and Pensions, accepting the Grant Award of £2,426,394.23 for the purpose of leading the expansion of the existing Doncaster Advance programme, with partners across the Sheffield City Region;
- (2) that subject to receipt of the European Social Fund Grant, the Council will commence recruitment to essential roles already outlined within the approved bid in order to ensure robust governance and project management systems are in place for delivery of the contract, and also to work on re-profiling the project as agreed with the Department for Work and Pensions; and
- (3) that Authority be delegated to the Director of Economy and Environment (*or in his absence the Assistant Director of Economy and Development*) and Director of Corporate Services (*or in her absence the Assistant Director of Finance*), in consultation with the Mayor and Portfolio Holder, to conclude satisfactory funding agreements with partners.

### 3. REASON FOR DECISION

Cabinet considered a report which sought approval to accept a Grant award of £2,426,394.23 from the European Social Fund, for the purpose of leading the expansion of the existing Doncaster Advance Programme, with partners across the Sheffield City Region. The report also sought approval to appoint two staff from the project budget to get the project up and running, and delegate authority to enable partnership contracts to be put in place with Barnsley Council, Sheffield Council and Doncaster Chamber, and potentially Rotherham Council.

In presenting the report, Councillor Bill Mordue, Portfolio Holder for Business Skills and Economic Development, spoke of the Sheffield City Region Advance project as being a positive development, resulting in a significant grant for delivery of employment, careers, training and progression for people in employment across South Yorkshire.

Councillor Mordue highlighted that:-

- Advance was first initiated by Doncaster Council in 2018, as part of the Council's 'Doncaster Growing Together' working plan. This innovative and transformational project had resulted in support to more than 700 Doncaster residents to date, and was growing daily with just a very small team.
- Advance created a quality sector and employer led careers information, including the Health and Social Care prospectus, which enabled the Council

to work across directorates to establish the Social Care Academy for recruitment into demand jobs during the Covid-19 pandemic.

- The Grant would accelerate the refresh of the existing prospectuses and with the development of new sector prospectuses, for example, Construction and Rail.
- It would take the Council's Advance scheme into the Sheffield City Region and meant that the Council could support more people in Doncaster.
- The project would work with more than two and half thousand people across participating areas, and target groups including, participants from ethnic minorities, participants with disabilities, those who live in single adult households with children, and those without Basic Skills.
- Advance was all about 'getting on in work' which would offer support to those at risk of redundancy and in career change and who needed to retrain into new areas and improve skills. Therefore, it was appropriate to the needs arising as a result of Covid-19's impact on the Borough's economy, as well as other systemic economic issues, that the Council have been dealing with locally.

To conclude, Councillor Mordue highlighted that the decision was progressing as an urgent decision to allow the funding agreement to be signed, which would enable the recruitment of the 2 dedicated programme management staff to lead and develop the project infrastructure, governance and partnership arrangements, and would allow output delivery to begin on 1st April, 2021.

Cabinet welcomed the expansion of the Advance programme that currently supported 2,500 participants back in to work. Cabinet felt that the programme was imperative as more people were seeking help back in to employment due to the impact of Covid-19. The Mayor was pleased to see that Doncaster was leading on this initiative, which was a consequence of Doncaster successfully delivering the programme, which would be extended to other local authorities in the Sheffield City Region.

#### **4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

Do Nothing. The wider Advance project would not proceed in partner areas. The Doncaster Advance project would not be expanded and provision would remain at existing levels.

#### **5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**

There were no declarations.

#### **6. IF EXEMPT, REASON FOR EXEMPTION**

Not Exempt.

#### **7. DIRECTOR RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

Dan Swaine, Director of Economy and Environment.

## DECISION 2

### 1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE

7. 2020-21 Quarter 2, Finance and Performance Improvement Report.

### 2. DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet:-

- (1) noted the Quarter 2 performance and financial information;
- (2) approved the virements in accordance with the Financial Procedure Rules, as detailed in the Financial profile in Appendix A;
- (3) noted the allocations of block budgets in the Capital Programme, as detailed in Appendix A – Financial Profile, and in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules (sections A and B);
- (4) approved payment to the Children’s Trust for the COVID-19 element of their overspend (£1.30m), with a reconciliation at year-end to ensure any surplus is returned to the Council;
- (5) approved payment to St Leger Homes for the COVID-19 pressures on homelessness services (£0.48m), with a reconciliation at year-end to ensure any surplus is returned to the Council; and
- (6) approved the receipt of the £1.2m gain share resource from Sheffield City Region and delegated the decisions around the allocation of this money to the Director of Corporate Resources, in consultation with the Mayor.

### 3. REASON FOR DECISION

Cabinet considered the Finance and Performance report for Quarter 2 for the 2020-21 financial year, which set out the Council’s current financial forecast position against its 2020/21 budget and performance against key Service Standards.

Mayor Ros Jones introduced the report and commented that despite the challenge of restarting Council services following the national lockdown in June, the Council had once again stepped up to support communities, individuals and businesses during the second lockdown, which would come to an end tomorrow. The second wave of the pandemic had brought similar, but different challenges. Despite this, the Council had predominately maintained Council services.

In relation to performance, the Mayor highlighted the following areas of improvement:-

- The Council had managed to maintain targets for processing housing benefit claims and Council Tax support, whilst at the same time, working on business support payments and self-isolation payments;

- 81% of Council spend was with local suppliers, which was the highest level recorded since 2014, and equated to nearly £30 million going directly into the local economy from Doncaster Council;
- The Council's 'One Stop Shop' had remained open and continued to deliver key services, and had received over 22,500 more telephone calls compared to the last quarter.

The Mayor reported that the Council had dealt with the financial challenges brought about by Covid-19 and had received £34.7m to support the Council's operations. The Council was managing these resources carefully to ensure service and cost pressures were monitored during the financial year. It was noted that the financial challenges would be updated and revisited as part of the budget setting process and Medium Term Financial Strategy refresh upon receipt of the Financial Settlement in early December.

In commenting on the report, the Mayor was pleased to note that although there had been a demand on Council services as more people had required assistance due to Covid-19, this had been kept within the budget. The Mayor was also pleased to note that the Government had now provided the Council with additional funding which would help to provide free school meals to children and families during the Christmas and Easter holiday periods.

#### **4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

There were no other alternatives considered or rejected.

#### **5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**

There were no declarations.

#### **6. IF EXEMPT, REASON FOR EXEMPTION**

Not Exempt.

#### **7. DIRECTOR RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

Debbie Hogg, Director of Corporate Resources.

### **DECISION 3**

#### **1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE**

8. St Leger Homes of Doncaster Ltd (SLHD) Performance & Delivery Update: 2020/21 Quarter Two (Q2).

#### **2. DECISION TAKEN**

Cabinet noted the progress of St. Leger Homes of Doncaster (SLHD) performance outcomes and the contribution SLHD makes to supporting DC strategic priorities.

#### **3. REASON FOR DECISION**

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Glyn Jones, Cabinet Member for Housing and

Equalities, introduced St Leger Homes of Doncaster Performance and Delivery Update report for 2020/21 Quarter 2.

The Deputy Mayor highlighted that Quarter 2 had seen the continuing impact of Covid-19 on St Leger Homes. Following significant reductions in service during Quarter 1, the second quarter had seen services returning to more normal means of operation, but with some impact arising from adopting safe working practices, or changes in tenant's behaviour, due to their concerns about keeping safe.

He explained that because the majority of performance was reported on a cumulative basis, the considerable impact of Covid-19 on Quarter 1, was likely to cast a shadow over the whole year. Consequently for Quarter 2, as with Quarter 1, only 5 indicators were on target, 1 was amber and 9 were below target, despite performance generally improving on a monthly basis.

The Deputy Mayor highlighted in particular, the following Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which were critical and worse than target:-

KPI: 1 Rent Arrears

A wide range of issues had impacted on KPI 1, not least the perilous financial position of many tenants, the offered 'rent holiday' and the suspension of formal arrears action as determined by the government. Overall, the position had meant that rent collection at the end of the period, was £57,000 worse off than the position at the end of April 2020.

KPI: 2 and 3

In relation to Void Rent Loss and the average number of calendar days to re-let standard properties, both indicators were severely affected by the suspension of the lettings and advertising cycle in accordance with Government guidelines.

KPIs 4,5 & 6

With regard to the homeless indicators. The "everyone in" announcement by the government in March, had seen a significant increase in homeless applications. Considerable work was taking place right across the homelessness partnership, to address the increasing demand for support.

KPI: 10

In relation to Gas servicing. Normally, this indicator operated at 100%, but the suspension of gas servicing at the outset of the initial lockdown period and the refusal of some tenants to allow access, had impacted on performance. Overall, performance of 99.95%, equated to seven properties out of 15,057 which required a gas service during the six month period.

The Mayor was pleased to note an improvement in the reduction in the number of empty properties and looked forward to seeing the number of repairs and days taken to undertake repair work to be reduced further, as and when services returned back to normal. The Mayor praised the St. Leger Homes' staff for the efforts being made to collect rent and rent arrears, during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

There were no other alternatives considered or rejected.

**5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**

There were no declarations.

**6. IF EXEMPT, REASON FOR EXEMPTION**

Not Exempt.

**7. DIRECTOR RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

Dave Richmond, Chief Executive Officer, St. Leger Homes Doncaster Ltd.

**DECISION 4**

**1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE**

9. Performance Challenge of Doncaster Children's Services Trust: Quarter 2, 2020/21.

**2. DECISION TAKEN**

Cabinet noted the progress of Doncaster Children's Services Trust performance outcomes and the contribution that the Trust makes to support the Council's strategic priorities.

**3. REASON FOR DECISION**

Cabinet considered a report introduced by the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Glyn Jones, Cabinet Member for Housing and Equalities, which provided an update on the current progress of DCST's performance against key performance indicators, including the response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact on the delivery of services.

The Deputy Mayor outlined that:-

- Through the lockdown, the Trust continued to deliver its service to children, young people and families, and had worked closely with Doncaster Council colleagues.
- The impact of Covid-19 had been felt during Quarter 2 and into Quarter 3, in particular, increased demand for referrals of 67% in July and 52% in September.
- Caseloads in the Trust's Assessments Team had increased due to the additional demand pressures, but the Trust had taken, and was taking, steps to alleviate this pressure. The Trust was working closely with Doncaster Council colleagues to secure additional resource to manage these pressures, whilst securing good quality social care.
- Despite Covid and the rising demand pressures, the Trust's performance had remained relatively strong across its Key Performance Indicators and strategic indicators. There was a programme of practice improvement to address findings from recent audit activity, in order to ensure consistency of practice

across the social care system.

- The number of Out of Authority children had increased and were reviewed on a weekly basis.
- The Trust was developing approaches to reduce agency costs, including a Social Worker Academy and a Social Worker Retention Strategy.
- Overall, the Trust believed that it could meet the needs of the Medium Term Financial Strategy, excluding Covid-19, albeit with changed phasings over the next three years.
- The full impact of Covid-19 on society, especially on children and families in need of support and potentially children coming into care, was still unknown.
- The Trust continued to work hard to keep children and families safe, working with strategic safeguarding partners including the Council, police, health and schools.

The Mayor highlighted that the Council had recognised the pressures on families impacted by Covid-19 and stressed that the Council would endeavour to do all that it could to ensure that children were kept safe. She acknowledged that as with many local authorities across the country, the Trust was facing significant financial pressures which was because of the increased costs associated with Looked after Children and employing agency staff. The Council would ensure that representations were made to the Government to ensure that adequate funding be made available to provide services.

**4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

There were no other alternatives considered or rejected.

**5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**

There were no declarations.

**6. IF EXEMPT, REASON FOR EXEMPTION**

Not Exempt.

**7. DIRECTOR RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

James Thomas, Chief Executive Officer, Doncaster Children's Services Trust.

Signed.....Chair/Decision Maker