

16 March 2011

Arts, Leisure and Culture Select Committee Review of Work 2007-11

Summary

Members are asked to consider the information outlining the work of the Select Committee during the period of 2007-11.

Detail

1. The Committee has undertaken a wide variety of work over the period of the current Council. This has included in-depth scrutiny reviews, and EIT reviews of various types.
2. As the meeting of 16 March is scheduled to be the final meeting of the current Committee, this report has been compiled in order to summarise this work. Similar reports are being provided at the final meetings of the other Select Committees.

In-Depth Scrutiny Reviews

3. During the municipal years 2007-8, and 2008-9, the Committee undertook scrutiny reviews of River Based Leisure Facilities, and Tees Active Limited.

Review of River Based Leisure Facilities

Scope and findings

4. The River Tees represents the Borough's most important natural asset. Over the last c.15 years, there has been a concerted effort to remedy the effects of the area's industrial decline on the river and riverside area, including for example the construction of the Tees Barrage. The Select Committee took the opportunity to review the progress made so far in terms of improving use of the area as a leisure destination and to examine ways of further improving recreational use of the Tees.
5. The Committee found that a significant amount of progress had been made in relation to the developing the use of the river as a leisure asset. The river and Barrage facilities had improved to such an extent that there was increasing opportunities to attract sporting events of national and international significance. The area had been successful in changing perceptions of the Tees, but more needed to be done to promote river based tourism opportunities. Issues were identified in relation to access to the riverside,

communication, and increased community usage. The Committee identified an opportunity to enhance the partnership working that was already apparent.

6. The following key outcomes have been achieved:

- An officer was appointed to lead on river based issues, and helped establish the River Users Group (RUG) which has become a key forum for bringing together all river stakeholders;
- Development of marketing and communications, including a website and schools information pack;
- Establishment of the Take to the Tees event, aimed at promoting usage of the river by the local community, and related sporting events such as the Triathlon, Regatta and River Rat Race;
- The establishment of the Tees River Trust in order to help sustain environmental improvements to the Tees;
- Closer working relationship with the Barrage, through the re-developed and upgraded White Water Course, and the appointment of Tees Active to run the re-opened course;
- Work continues to develop access to the 'River Tees Park' area;
- Use of RUG to consult with river users and highlight opportunities in relation to riverside planning policy and developments;
- Removal of TS Kellington from its riverside location and the River Stewardship Group has been established as part of RUG in order to maintain an overview of the riverside environment.

Review of Tees Active Limited (TAL)

Scope and findings

7. The review represented the first opportunity for the Council to undertake a comprehensive review of Tees Active's performance as the independent leisure trust responsible for the operation of the Borough's leisure centres.
8. The Committee found that Tees Active had more than delivered against its original aims. There had been large increases in attendance at local leisure centres and swimming pools, services had improved, and the Borough's leisure services had established a favourable local and regional reputation. A number of recommendations were agreed in order to build on these achievements.
- 9. The following key outcomes have been achieved:**

- The TAL website has been developed and the possibility of e-commerce opportunities is being investigated;
- A Tees Valley scheme has been developed in order to provide free access to facilities for aspiring Olympians, and locally some access to TAL Academy facilities was extended to those who did not yet qualify for full Academy status;
- TAL now attend the Council's Community Cohesion Network group in order to improve consultation initiatives;
- Implementation of the Borough's Sport and Active Leisure Strategy will see TAL work with partners to further develop the approach to inclusion;

- TAL has continued to seek new business opportunities and will manage the upgraded White Water Course at the Tees Barrage.

Efficiency, Improvement and Transformation (EIT) Programme

10. Members will be aware that the majority of the work programme for 2009-10, and 2010-11, has been concerned with undertaking EIT reviews.

EIT Review of Sport, Leisure and Recreation

Scope and findings

11. The review covered Leisure and Sport Development, commissioning of services from Tees Active Limited (TAL), recreational management of the Borough's parks, countryside sites and other greenspaces, Green Infrastructure Strategy & Action Plan, and the Play Strategy.
12. The Committee found that the affected services were well-regarded and valued by users. Options were identified that would maintain service delivery wherever possible, however due to the financial position facing the Council, it was necessary to restrict the scope of service provision in some areas.
13. **The following key outcomes have been identified:**
 - Transfer of management responsibility for Billingham Beck Valley Countryside Park and Cowpen Bewley Countryside Park from the Council to Tees Valley Wildlife Trust;
 - Reconfiguration of Countryside Rangers to focus on maintenance activities;
 - Removal of Countryside and Greenspace research budget and reduction in Environmental Development budget;
 - Reduction and re-focus of Sports Development Team in order to shift towards strategic commissioning approach;
 - Staffing efficiencies at TAL and consolidation of TAL river based activities at Tees Barrage;
 - Further work to identify improved trading opportunities at TAL and a sub-regional approach to commissioning, and potential reductions in service delivery if these were not sufficient to achieve savings targets.
14. An Action Plan setting out how these would be achieved was considered by the Committee on 9 February.

EIT Review of Adult Operational Services (Gateway)

Scope and findings

15. The review covered adult social care day services, home care, STEPS at Tithebarn, and residential provision. The review identified that in-house day

care at Alma Centre should be moved to the Halcyon Centre, in-house home care should re-focus on an enablement service, and that STEPS at Tithebarn and services provided at Blenheim House should be reviewed to ensure that they continued to meet client needs.

16. The following key outcomes are being progressed:

- Alma Day Care service to be re-provided at the Halcyon Centre scheduled from February.
- Following consultation, STEPS at Tithebarn clients are transferring to alternative services, predominantly the Halcyon Centre.
- Following consultation, services provided at Blenheim House are to cease with all clients electing to access alternative sources including independent living. Savings will be achieved from 2012-13.
- The In-house Home Care service is being re-evaluated with a view to focussing it on the provision of enablement care for specific client groups. Financial implications will be evaluated as the new service develops.

Lead Officer Comments

17. Alma Centre transferred to the Halcyon site on 4th February 2011. It is evident that the client's and staff are very pleased with their new centre.
18. Of the original 15 long term client's at Blenheim House at the start of the EIT, 14 have now secured placements of their choice. 11 have moved, and monitoring of their welfare has been positive. Plans are in place for the remaining people who it is anticipated will move by end of March 2011. Clients and their families have been extremely complimentary of the way these moves have been orchestrated. Whilst carrying out these moves we have also redeployed a total of 14 staff and worked with those remaining to agree voluntary redundancy or retirement as planned options.
19. We have received verbal and written commendations from the families and carers who are appreciative of the support they have all been afforded.

EIT Review of Highways, Lighting and Network Management (Gateway)

Scope and findings

20. The review covered highways policy and network management, and maintenance of associated assets including roads and street furniture (including street lighting).
21. The review identified that the Council should pursue a PFI strategy for maintenance of street lighting in the first instance. The review also found that there were opportunities to ensure that the Council's in-house CFYA team should be used on a commercial basis for highway capital schemes, and that opportunities should be taken to reduce energy costs and improve communication with customers.

22. **Key outcomes were as follows:**

- The PFI scheme has been withdrawn by Government.
- Following this, discussions are ongoing about bringing the street light service in-house, with consideration also being given to partnership working with Darlington and Hartlepool. It is unlikely there will be additional investment or prudential borrowing to support replacement of columns. The target saving for this action is £200k.
- Lit road signs will be decommissioned with reflective versions and this is projected to save £25k.
- The Highways Task and Finish Group will look further at the use of in-house resources for highway improvement schemes. This Group will also take forward the recommendation to examine closer links between the Network Management Team and Highway Inspection Service. Target saving is £260k.
- A £3k saving will be achieved by using e-methods to consult with residents and customers.

Lead Officer Comments

23. I was extremely pleased that the outcomes of this review gave a focus for improving service delivery going forward. However, the cancellation of the street lighting PFI programme by the Government was a disappointment and has caused the need to re-think how we invest in street lighting going forward. As energy prices continue to rise and the stock continues to age, myself and my officers will work closely with Members to ensure we find some innovative solutions to protect our highways and street lighting assets going forward.

EIT Review of Property and Facilities Management (Gateway)

Scope and findings

24. This review examined the Council's management of hard Facilities Management (eg. air conditioning units), and soft FM (eg. cleaning). The review identified that good practice elsewhere involved a strategic approach to FM and consolidation of key staff into one team. Outsourcing and partnership working were also identified as possible options.

25. **Key outcomes from the review included:**

- The review recommended that a consolidated (in-house) approach be taken. A new structure has been developed, and savings will be achieved through prioritisation of budgets, and demand management. Savings could be as much as £300k.
- Further work may take place in the future to identify options for partnering of these services.

EIT Task and Finish Review of Finance, Audit and Risk Management

Scope and findings

26. This officer-led review covered Internal Audit, Risk Management and Insurance and Finance sections. The review found that the services were providing an excellent level of service, but that opportunities would arise to re-structure the teams using retirement of key staff and vacant posts, and the need to reduce the focus on non-value adding activities.
27. **Key outcomes from the review were as follows:**
- Reduced Internal Audit section which will be merged with the Financial Planning team.
 - The Finance service's main focus will be strategic financial support, stewardship and direction to the Council, and it will rationalise routine functions which are not considered to add value. The service will be restructured and reduced in size to reflect standardised and simplified procedures, removal of functions, and the impact of changes associated with financial planning and the roles and responsibilities of the Head of Finance & Assets and Head of Finance, Procurement & Performance.
 - There will be no change to the Risk Management and Insurance function at this moment in time (apart from reduced team due to staff retirement). A further review of the function to be undertaken in 2012 when the Corporate Risk and Insurance Manager retires.
 - Overall savings for the review could amount to £358k pa when fully realised.

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