

Cabinet

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday, 2nd November, 2006.

Present: Cllr R Gibson (Chairman), Cllr D Coleman, Cllr Mrs P A Cains, Cllr R Cook, Cllr A Cunningham, , Cllr E Johnson, Cllr P Kirton, Cllr K Leonard, Cllr S Nelson, Cllr Mrs J O'Donnell

Officers: G. Garlick (CE), D. Hurwood (R); A. Baxter, R. Hill, P. Smith (CESC); M. Batty, C. Straughan; D. Bond, M. Henderson, G. Birtle, S. Connolly, J. Trainer, S. Whaley (LD)

Also in attendance: Cllr Mrs Beaumont, Cllr Fletcher, Cllr Lupton, Cllr Mrs Rigg, Cllr Woodhouse and Cllr Mrs. Womphrey

Apologies:

679 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Fletcher declared a personal, non prejudicial interest in item 4 entitled Preston Hall and Park and Museum Strategy as he was a Member of Egglecliffe Parish Council and attended Egglecliffe Parish Church, both of which were consultees in this matter.

Councillor Mrs Rigg declared a personal, non prejudicial interest in item 4 entitled Preston Hall and Park and Museum Strategy as she was a Member of Egglecliffe Parish Council which was a consultee in this matter.

Councillor Cunningham declared a personal prejudicial interest in item 7 entitled 'Proposed alterations to Abbey Hill and Westlands Schools' as he was a Governor of Abbey Hill School. Councillor Cunningham left the meeting for the duration of the discussion and voting on this matter.

Councillor Mrs Cains declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in item 7 entitled 'Proposed alterations to Abbey Hill and Westlands Schools', as she was a Governor of King Edwin's School which was referred to in the report.

Councillor Mrs Beaumont declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in item 7 entitled 'Proposed alterations to Abbey Hill and Westlands Schools', as she was a Governor of King Edwin's School which was referred to in the report.

Councillor Cook declared a personal, non prejudicial interest in respect of item 9 entitled Supporting people 4 year Strategy 2006 - 2010 as his parents received services provided via the Supporting People Strategy.

Councillor Mrs Rigg declared a personal, prejudicial interest in respect of item 10 entitled Review of Concierge Security Service as she had a close relative who lived in accommodation covered by the Concierge Service. Councillor Mrs Rigg left the meeting for the duration of the discussion and voting on this matter.

Councillor Cook declared a personal non prejudicial interest in item 12 entitled 'Minutes of Outside Bodies' and specifically the Joint Strategy Committee minutes – Development Initiative for Chemical Dependent Areas Annual Conference due to his employment in the Chemical Industry.

680 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 5th October 2006 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

681 Review of Preston Hall and Park/Museums Strategy

Cabinet considered the report and recommendations of a review of Preston Hall and Park / Museums Strategy, undertaken by the Adults, Leisure and Culture Select Committee between April and October 2006. The report was presented to Cabinet by the Chairman of the Adults, Leisure and Culture Select Committee.

It was explained that the review was undertaken as a result of the need to examine services offered at the Hall and Park in light of the recently adopted Museum Strategy. The Select Committee took evidence from a wide variety of witnesses – both internal and external, and also undertook consultation with residents of the Borough via a number of focus groups (including a youth focus group). The Select Committee also held a site visit to the Dorman and Captain Cook Museums in Middlesbrough in order to undertake comparative work.

The whole of the review concerned discretionary services of the Council. There was no legal obligation to provide them in this manner, or at all. Having considered this, the Committee agreed that the services and facilities should continue for the following reasons:-

- The Museums Service was valued for enhancing the quality of the lives of the users, not only as part of Education but also in enhancing people's appreciation of the history of their own area and, more widely, how they had come to be.
- The Park gave varied opportunities for healthy recreation, relaxation, entertainment and the appreciation of this part of the valley of the lower Tees.
- Improved facilities for the people of the Borough were more likely to attract tourists from outside of the area, boosting the local economy.

Cabinet noted that it had become apparent to the Committee that there were problems and opportunities on three levels:-

- The small things for which Officers were expected to take remedial action out of existing resources without the need for Cabinet approval. A number of these appeared in the written evidence provided to Cabinet. Officers had given assurances that they would deal promptly with any Health & Safety issues coming to their attention.
- Improvements, which needed more thought, and investment, but which could be started in the next year or two. An example of this would be to begin to make Preston Park an example of good practice in catering for people with disabilities, not merely complying with the Disability Discrimination Act.
- The longer-term vision, the realisation of which might depend on an unpredictable timetable of availability of external resources, such as grants. In this the Committee were heartened and encouraged by the announcement during their work of the success of the Council's bid for £206,000 Heritage

Lottery Funding to restore the Winter Garden of the Hall.

Resulting recommendations were based around the need to address the issues outlined above and to ensure that the Hall and Park achieved their potential as a broadly based public amenity and facility of historical significance.

Cabinet discussed the report and supported the recommendations.

The Leader, on behalf of Cabinet, thanked the Chairman and Members of the Select Committee for the excellent work they had produced.

RESOLVED that:-

1. the Park and Museum Master plan be produced, with consideration given to the inclusion of the issues outlined in the findings of the review.

2. greater collaboration between the Museum Service, Events Team and various community settings (Community Centres, Libraries, Schools, etc) be undertaken.

3. neighbourhood representatives be include on the Park Management Group, to ensure:

- o Greater engagement with local communities to produce a fair and flexible activities framework

- o Improve communication between service managers and the local communities.

4. the current entrance fee be retained, until further review. Officers to explore innovative admission packages in connection with events and park and ride.

5. CMT review Park and Hall management with the aim of providing a more coherent and 'joined-up' approach to working.

682 Review of NHS Dentistry Provision in Stockton Borough

Cabinet considered the report and recommendations of a review of National Health Service (NHS) dentistry provision in Stockton Borough. The report was presented to Cabinet by the Chairman of the Health Select Committee.

The review had been instigated owing to concerns that, without, NHS dentists, patients would have to opt for private provision, travel outside of the Borough for NHS treatment or choose not to have treatment which might result in a reduction of preventative care. In January 2006, North Tees Primary Care Trust (PCT) had confirmed that there were no dentists offering NHS treatment for new adult patients in the Stockton area. The Committee took evidence from a wide variety of witnesses including the PCT, dentists and patient and public representatives.

The Committee hoped at the beginning of the review to have been able to help find a resolution to the problem that residents had in accessing an NHS dentist locally. Unfortunately this had not been possible and the problem remained in place even though all interested parties were working hard to find alternative solutions.

A major concern was that the new contract arrangements impacted on the level of preventative care that was available. As a result consideration was given to the issue of fluoridation of Stockton's water supply. Evidence provided pointed towards its oral health benefits but this would need to be considered in light of residents' views.

The Committee recognised that needs for elderly people were as important in the planning of dental services as that available for younger residents.

Recognising the effort that officers in the PCT were giving, the Committee hoped that it and Council officers could give support in helping disseminate information and publicity for the PCT as it continued to overcome the issues highlighted in the review.

Cabinet discussed the report and supported the recommendations.

The Leader, on behalf of Cabinet, thanked the Chairman and Members of the Select Committee for the excellent work they had produced.

It was suggested that the Select Committee's report be presented to the Children's Trust Board.

RESOLVED that:-

1. It be recommended to the North Tees Primary Care Trust that: -
 - a) when targeting areas and patient groups for the use of its mobile dental facility, particular consideration be given to providing access in areas of high density of elderly people, especially where NHS provision had been removed or locations of nursing care homes.
 - b) when appropriate, participate in initiatives that introduce or increase children's access to fluoride.
2. it be recommended to the North East Strategic Health Authority that it undertake consultation in Stockton Borough to determine the level of local support for the introduction of fluoridation to the borough's water supply.
3. before the academic year 2007-08 Stockton-on-Tees Children's Trust, with North Tees PCT maximise the uptake of school dental screening and dental surveys by incorporating dental consent within the health consent forms used at the beginning of children's school careers.
4. assistance be given to North Tees PCT to publicise issues about NHS dentistry through Council publications, in particular Stockton News, which was delivered to every house in the borough.

5. Council officers with links to the many and various community and voluntary groups provide the Head of Primary Care, North Tees PCT with contact information to target those groups in order to publicise dentistry issues.
6. the Community Lynx 'demand responsive' bus service advertises access to dental practices as part of its health care remit.
7. the Integrated Transport Environmental Policy Unit provide the Committee with an accessibility map to identify available bus transport to dental practices in the borough.
8. the Select Committee's report be presented to the Children's Trust Board.

683 Appointment of Local Education Authority Representatives to School Governing Bodies

Cabinet Members were requested to consider the nominations to school Governing Bodies in accordance with the procedure for the appointment of school governors, approved as Minute 84 of the Cabinet (11th May 2000).

RESOLVED that the appointments to the following School Governing Bodies be approved in line with agreed procedures subject to successful List 99 check and Personal Disclosure: -

Crooksbarrow Primary School – Ms. J. L. Hooper.

684 Proposed changes to Abbey Hill and Westlands Schools

Members were reminded that, at its meeting held on 7 September 2006, Cabinet had received a report on the outcome of a review of provision for pupils with special educational needs. Members agreed that consultation should take place on proposed changes including:

- a) the enlargement of Abbey Hill School Technology College to create 40 additional places for pupils aged 11-19 with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD);
- b) the removal of provision for pupils with ASD from Westlands School;

All the responses received from parents and carers, school staff and governors, health authorities and neighbouring local authorities had been positive. Some concerns were expressed about the impact of change on individual pupils, but no opposition to these changes had emerged. Members were therefore asked to agree the publication of a Statutory Notice, formally proposing the changes for pupils with ASD.

Consultation was continuing on proposed changes to provision at Westlands School and King Edwin School for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulty (BESD). It was explained that this would be the subject of a separate report to Cabinet. A draft Notice was circulated for Members' attention.

RESOLVED that Statutory Notice be published inviting comment on proposals to:-

1. increase with effect from 1 September 2008 the number of planned places at Abbey Hill School Technology College from 230 to 270;
2. discontinue with effect from 31 August 2008 provision at Westlands School for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders.

685 Annual Performance Assessment of Services for Children and Young People - report to follow 1.11.06

Cabinet was informed that the Annual Performance Assessment of services for children and young people in Stockton on Tees Borough Council had been carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) in conjunction with the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI). It had been based on a self-assessment by the authority in combination with performance and inspection information in the year 2005-06. The results were formally announced on 1st November and the notification letter from OFSTED was provided to Members.

It was explained that there were three parts to the scoring; for the local authority's children's services, its capacity to improve its services and for the local authority's social care services for children and young people.

The scores awarded were:

- The contribution of local authority's children's services in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people- 4
- The council's overall capacity to improve its services for children and young people-4
- The contribution of the local authority's social care services to maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people-3

Grade 4 represented a service that delivered well above minimum requirements for users and is deemed to be excellent/outstanding. This was the top grade.

Grade 3 represented a service that consistently delivered above minimum requirements for users and was deemed to be good.

These scores would form part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment and represented a significant improvement from the previous year when the scores were: -

- The local authority's children's services-3
- The local authority's education services-3 (subsequently not separately graded)
- The local authority's social care services for children and young people-2
- The council's capacity to improve its services for children and young people-3

The notification letter commented in detail on each of the five "Every Child Matters" Outcomes, identified key strengths and recommended key areas for improvement. The areas for improvement were all areas which the authority had identified already and had either tied into this year's planning process or would be developed in next year's.

In 2007, there would be further significant inspections of the Council's services.

The authority had received notification of the Audit Commission's intention to conduct a Corporate Assessment of the Council's overall performance in December 2007. Linked to this there would be, at the same time, a Joint Area Review of our Children's Services.

The two inspections would make a significant call on member and senior officer time, but nevertheless could be welcomed by the Council as an opportunity to test its progress against the new tougher inspection standards.

The process would involve a large team of inspectors on site over two weeks from 3 December 2007.

A further Cabinet report would set out detailed preparation plans.

Cabinet agreed that the results highlighted the excellent work carried out by Officers. Members congratulated the Corporate Director and all staff within the Children, Education and Social Care Service.

RESOLVED that:-

1. the outcome of the Annual Performance Assessment be received and noted
2. the Comprehensive Performance Assessment and Joint Area Reviews be noted and further reports be submitted, on the planning for these events.

686 Supporting People 4 year Strategy 2006 - 1010

Cabinet considered a report detailing revisions to the Council's Supporting People Strategy (SP).

The Supporting People 5-Year Strategy, approved by Cabinet on 8th September 2005 had recently been updated and reviewed because of a number of changes within the programme both on a national and local level. These included: -

- a national review of the Government's approach to the programme,
- the local situation with the known outcomes of service reviews,
- the acknowledged under funding situation within the local programme,
- the announcement of the allocation for 2007/08.

In view of these changes the Supporting People Commissioning Body had taken the opportunity to update and review the Strategy in the light of the changes and publish a revised version covering the period 2006 – 2010.

The Supporting People 4-Year Strategy identified the key SP commissioning and work priorities within the Borough. The revisions provided clear outcomes and priorities for the programme over the following four years, focusing on both the immediate and longer term priorities. In addition the Strategy identified work priorities for the Supporting People team. The Supporting People

programme locally got £2.75 million / year from the DCLG and would get an additional £205k in 2007/08. To meet all the Council's strategic plans it needed in the region of an additional £1.3 million to enable the Supporting People Commissioning Body to achieve the outcomes of the 4-year Strategy and in order to meet the identified gaps existing within the Borough. The ability of the programme to attract the required additional funding was based on the outcome of national consultation on the SP distribution formula and 2007 Spending Review.

A full copy of the updated Four Year Strategy 2006 – 2010 was provided to Members.

RESOLVED that the Supporting People 4-Year Strategy 2006 – 2010 be approved and the continued development of the Strategy be supported.

687 Review of Concierge Security Service

A review of the Concierge Security Service has been undertaken over the last six months, and Cabinet was requested to endorse the key proposals emerging from the review.

Members were provided with background to the Council's Concierge Security Service, which was first established in 1994 (covering Stockton and Thornaby sites only), and extended to Billingham in 1997, in association with a major programme of refurbishment of the Council's blocks of flats. It provided a 24/7 service to 1,006 flats across the following sites: -

- Anson House and Hudson House (Village Ward, Thornaby)
- Hume House and Nolan House) (Stockton Town Centre Ward)
- Elm House, Campbell Court and Walton Court)
- Kennedy Gardens (Blocks 1-3) and Dawson House (Billingham Central Ward)
- Melsonby Court and Prior Court, Low Grange (Billingham East Ward)

Since its establishment the service had been highly valued by residents in the blocks (both tenants and the small number of leaseholders), as identified in successive customer satisfaction surveys. A summary of the most recent survey's, key findings was provided, and crime within the blocks had been reduced to virtually nil, with a dwelling burglary rate across the: 'Concierge Stock' far lower than the lowest rate per Ward.

The service provided was generally regarded as being of a high quality, but it was not cheap. The total budget for the service in 2006/07 was approximately £1.55 million, with the vast majority of this (94%) being made up of employee costs, and the remainder consisting of relatively small amounts for the maintenance and upgrading of CCTV systems (£60,000) and small amounts for transport (mainly mobile duty supervisors), uniforms, etc. With employee and other costs tending to rise by about 3% per year, and the aim for the Housing Revenue Account being to operate to the same financial discipline as the General Fund (i.e. limit to 1% increase in budgets per year), there was an annual inflationary 'gap' of 2% i.e. about £30,000.

The service was partly funded via service charges (£12.86 per week, based on 48 rent weeks, in 2006/07), which recovered about 32% of the total cost, with the remainder being met via general rent income to the Housing Revenue Account. Government guidance stated that service charges of this kind should be 'de-pooled', i.e. that local authorities should make progress to a position where service charges achieved full cost recovery, although this guidance was qualified by other Government guidance which stated that total charges to tenants should not increase year on year by more than the Retail Price Index plus 2%. Further work was being done on this issue, which included making representations to the Department for Communities and Local Government, and a further report would be brought to Cabinet on this issue during 2007.

The Service was last subject to a major review in 2001, the outcome of which was a significant reduction in the size of the core workforce, from 8 Supervisors (2 per shift) and 52 Concierge Security Officers to 4 Supervisors (1 per shift) and 44 Concierge Security Officers, with absence cover being provided by a mixture of directly employed relief staff, agency employees and sub-contractor's employees. This arrangement had worked well over the intervening five years, and was consistent with similar arrangements in other services, including Care for Your Area. The arrangement also provided an informal career structure for individuals who could enter the service as third party employees and 'graduate' to the Council's direct workforce.

The aims for this review were identified as being to reduce the cost of the Concierge Security Service and to provide a basis for a sustainable model of service in the medium term, i.e. the next three to six years (while maintaining the quality of service delivered). The challenge was to find the optimum balance between cost containment and preservation of service quality.

The review process had been undertaken in close conjunction with Tristar Homes Limited, who had facilitated a consultative group of six to eight residents, who volunteered in response to a letter sent to all residents in May, and with a workforce group, supplemented by informal discussions with officers of Stockton Unison. An 'Options' paper was provided to Members which identified 8 Options. These Options had been made available to both residents and workforce representatives, and parallel discussions with those two groups indicated an emerging consensus around a slight variation to Option 5, under which three of the main sites (Anson/Hudson; Nolan/Hume; and Kennedy/Dawson) would reduce to 'single crewing' between the hours of 1 am and 7 am. The remaining site (Melsonby/Prior) was exempt from this change, on the basis of an analysis of non-routine incidents dealt with by the Service, which showed a much higher level of incidents in the early hours at Low Grange than at the other three sites. This approach was also consistent with the way in which the service for the Elm/Campbell/Walton complex had been operated for the last two to three years.

This approach had been the subject of trials over the last three to four months. The first 'batch' had been put in place following discussion with the consultative group of residents and a second 'batch' had been put in place following discussion with the consultative group of residents.

Members noted that there were 4 vacancies against the establishment of 44

Concierge Security Officers, and one more Officer was due to retire by the end of January. The final choice between Option 2A (relying on 'natural wastage' alone) and Option 2B (offering Early Retirement/Voluntary Redundancy –ER/VR – Options) was not one which could be made at that time, because of the uncertainty about the future of the Local Government Superannuation Scheme, which made it temporarily impossible to calculate the cost of severance packages for individuals. However, the general principle which would be applied to any offer of ER/VR was that only those applications which represented a good business case in terms of early 'payback' of the costs involved by recurring annual savings could be considered for approval, and the extent of any such approvals would be determined also by the capacity of the Housing Revenue Account to cover the initial costs from reserves, without falling below the recommended level of reserves. It was not anticipated that there would be any prospect of compulsory redundancy as a result of these proposals: the only potential impact on the existing workforce was likely to be in terms of some change in shift patterns, to accommodate the proposed new pattern of service. Details were provided to Members.

Subject to the approval of Cabinet, it was proposed, before Christmas, to consult all residents of the blocks on the proposed changes, and to consult formally with the workforce and the relevant trade unions (UNISON and GMB). This consultation package would include the formal invitations to apply for redundancy, with reference to the proposed new scheme, and to apply for reduced working hours.

RESOLVED that:-

1. Option 5 ('single crewing' at selected sites between 1am and 7am) as set out at Appendix B, in conjunction with continuing selective use of third party employees, be endorsed in principle, as a basis for more formal and widespread consultation with residents, the workforce and trade unions.
2. a proposed final package of measures, following consultation with residents, workforce and trade unions be reported to the earliest practicable meeting of Cabinet.

688 Employment Land Review - Stage 1

Cabinet were informed that in order to support the regeneration of the Borough, by encouraging sustainable development, a review of employment land in the borough had been undertaken in accordance with the Government's Guidance Note on Employment Land Reviews. A copy of the Employment Land review final report was provided to Members.

The purpose of the report was to take stock of the existing Employment Land situation and assess the 'fitness for purpose' of existing available Employment Land Portfolio. The main objectives of this element of the review involved the identification of the 'best' sites, which should be protected, sites to be released, sites requiring further investigation and preparation of an effective brief for Stages 2 and 3 of the review.

Members were informed that the draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) aimed to increase the growth rate of the regions economy from 1.8% to an average rate

of 2.8% over its plan period. In order to assist this accelerated growth, it was essential that the 'scale and quality' of employment land sites met the needs of the market. An oversupply of employment land within the Tees Valley area was also identified in the RSS and de-allocation of unsuitable sites was recommended.

Cabinet was asked to endorse the report its findings and conclusions.

RESOLVED that:-

1. the Employment Land Review report, its findings and conclusions be endorsed.
2. during the process of preparing the Local Development Framework, Cabinet be minded to recommend, to Council, the de-allocation of the following sites, which were allocated for employment purposes in Stockton on Tees Local Plan:
 -
 - Belasis Avenue North and South
 - Urlay Nook
3. the following sites should not be considered for allocation for employment uses in the preparation of the Local Development Framework and should be retained as green wedge:
 - Land Adjacent to Synthonia sports ground
 - Bowsfield North
 - Smiths farm site
 - Former Cable Ski Site
4. the following site, which currently has no allocation and lies outside the limits to development no longer be considered as suitable for employment use:
 - Eaglescliffe Inward Investment Site
5. the intention to undertake a further stage in the assessment of employment land in the borough be noted.

689 Minutes of Outside Bodies

Consideration was given to the following minutes:-

Eastern Area Partnership Board - 25 July 2006
Eastern Area Partnership Board - 26 September 2006
Northern Area Partnership Board - 3 July 2006
Renaissance Board - 4 July 2006
Tees Valley Joint Strategy Committee - 27 July 2006

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings detailed at the Appendices attached be received/approved, as appropriate.

690 Stockton on Tees Borough Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Report 2005/2006

Cabinet considered a report informing Members of the completion of the second Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), prior to it being submitted to the Secretary of State before the end of December 2006. It was explained the AMR also considered which of the existing Local plan policies required saving beyond September 2007. Members were provided with a copy of the Annual Monitoring Report.

Annual Monitoring Reports had to be based upon the period from 1 April to 31 March, and submitted to the Secretary of State no later than the end of the following December. This report dealt with Annual Monitoring Report for 2005/06, which needed to be submitted by the end December 2006.

Under the Local Development Framework guidance, a set of core indicators were included which local authorities were required to address in their Annual Monitoring Report. These indicators had to be collected within a consistent timeframe using a clearly identified set of definitions. Detailed definitions were set out to assist local authorities with this task.

It was explained that, there were no adopted policies for Stockton Borough under the new Local Development Framework. All policies in the existing Local Plan (1997) were saved for three years following the introduction of the 2004 Act. This meant that unless action was taken, these would not be valid after September 2007. An additional task of the AMR was to carry out an evaluation of existing policies, and come to a conclusion as to which needed saving beyond 27 September 2007, and which should be deleted. A schedule of policies, which should be saved/deleted, together with reasons, was included in the AMR. The policies had been tested against the criteria below. However, the saving or deletion of policies needed to be agreed with Government Office North East following the submission of the AMR, or by submitting information by 1 April 2007.

To be saved, policies had to

- reflect the principles of LDFs
- be consistent with current national policy
- have a clear central strategy
- have regard to the Community Strategy
- be in general conformity with RSS
- not simply repeat national or regional policy.

The Annual Monitoring Report would enable the Council to:

- assess progress towards meeting the targets set out in the Local Development Scheme.
- strengthen baseline data against which to monitor performance in the future.
- identify further gaps in the knowledge base, to enable systems to be put in place to collect information required for monitoring.
- look at the existing Local Plan policies to assess their effectiveness
- reach a decision on which policies, in the Council's view, should be saved beyond September 2007.

RECOMMENDED to Council that:-

1) the second Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Report be noted and endorsed

2) the schedule of policies to be saved/deleted beyond September 2007, prior to submission to Government Office North East for consideration, be agreed.

691 School Performance 2005-2006

Members noted a report that provided information relating to school performance 2005/06