

Cabinet

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday, 8th January, 2009.

Present: Cllr Ken Lupton (Chairman); Cllr Mrs Jennie Beaumont, Cllr Robert Cook, Cllr Terry Laing, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy and Cllr Steve Nelson.

Officers: N Schneider, H Dean (CE); J Danks, P Saunders (RES); M Batty, R McGuckin, J Nixon, M Robinson, R Poundford (DNS); J Humphreys, R Kench, S Willson (CESC); D E Bond, M Waggott, P K Bell (LD).

Also in attendance: Cllr Fletcher, 2 Members of the Public.

Apologies: Cllr David Coleman, Cllr Alex Cunningham and Cllr Mary Womphrey.

CAB Declarations of Interest **119/08**

Cllr Cook declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 3 - Local Authority Representatives on School Governing Bodies as he was a Governor at Norton Primary School.

Councillor Mrs McCoy declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 5 - Economic Climate - Update Report as she was the Chair of Stockton District Information and Advice Service.

Councillor Nelson declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 5 - Economic Climate - Update Report as he was a Member of Tristar Homes Board.

Councillor Nelson declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 5 - Economic Climate - Update Report as he was the Member of Stockton District Information Advice Service.

Councillor Nelson declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 6 - Review of the Concierge Security Service as he was a Member of Tristar Homes Board.

Councillor Nelson declared a personal/ non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 7 - 2009/10 Annual Rent Increase (Council Housing Stock) as he served on the Tristar Homes Ltd Management Board.

Councillor Mrs McCoy declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 11 - Review of Medium Term Financial Plan 2009/10 as she was the Chair of Stockton District Information and Advice Service.

Councillor Nelson declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 11 - Review of Medium Term Financial Plan 2009/10 as he was a Member of Tristar Homes Board.

Councillor Nelson declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 11 - Review of Medium Term Financial Plan 2009/10 as he was the Member of Stockton District Information Advice Service.

Councillor Beaumont declared a person/non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 13 - Parish Boundary Review as she was a member of Castle

Leavington and Kirklevington Parish Council.

Councillors Lupton, Beaumont, Cook, Fletcher, Laing, Nelson and Mrs Womphrey declared personal non prejudicial interests in respect of agenda item 14 - Review of Operation of English National Concessionary Travel Scheme due to knowing someone that benefited from the National Concessionary Travel Scheme.

CAB Local Authority Representatives on School Governing Bodies

120/08

Consideration was given to a report of the School & Governor Support Service Manager regarding appointment of representatives to School Governing Bodies.

It was explained that in accordance with the procedure for the appointment of school governors, approved as Minute 84 of the Cabinet (11th May 2000), Cabinet was invited to consider the nominations to school Governing Bodies listed:

Egglescliffe School

Vacancy – Mr P Moppett, resigned due to other commitments

Nominee – Mr R Rowlinson (Lab)

Norton Primary School

Vacancy - Mr G Tamblingson (Lab), resigned due to other commitments

Nominee – Helen Morrisey (School nomination)

St Joseph's RC VA Primary School, Norton

Vacancy – Mrs H Lee, term of office expired 13 October 2008

Nominee – Mrs H Lee

RESOLVED that appointments were made to the vacant Governorships subject to successful List 99 check and Personal Disclosure.

CAB 2008 Annual Performance Assessment of Services for Children and Young People in Stockton on Tees Borough Council

121/08

Consideration was given to a report and a letter from Ofsted which summarised the findings of the 2008 annual performance assessment of Children's Services for Stockton-on-Tees Council.

The APA of children's services was based on a range of evidence, including a self-assessment, the review of the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP), performance indicators, other related service inspections, and briefings from other inspectorates and relevant bodies. The APA scores contributed to the Comprehensive Performance Assessment of the Council.

The performance ratings judged the Council's contribution to outcomes for children and young people to be at least good and outstanding in one area. The graded judgements* included were as follows:-

Overall effectiveness of children's services: Grade 3

Being Healthy: Grade 3

Staying Safe: Grade 3
Enjoying & Achieving: Grade 3
Making A Positive Contribution: Grade 3
Achieving Economic Wellbeing: Grade 4
Capacity to improve, including the management of Children's Services: Grade 3

*Judgements are made on a 4 point scale, with Grade 3 being 'Good' and Grade 4 'Outstanding'.

The overall profile of scores placed the Council as the highest performing within the Tees Valley area and one of the higher performing councils within our group of 'statistical neighbours'. Whilst our scores were lower overall than in 2007 (when all judgements were graded 4, except for Being Healthy and Enjoying & Achieving) the context nationally was one of overall decrease in scores. Amongst our statistical neighbour group, 5 of the 9 had experienced some level of reduction in their scores.

The APA report identified many key strengths as well as a small number of areas for development. The report was helpful in supporting the Council's own assessment of its performance and in contributing to the review of strategic plans and service improvement plans, to ensure the necessary actions were in place to build on strengths and respond to the areas for development. The Children and Young People's Plan provided the strategic framework for improvement in services, and included a range of actions already in place to address the areas for development.

The Council's progress in delivery and improvement of services would continue to be monitored through a range of meetings over the year with regional and national agencies. Progress in addressing performance would be reported to Cabinet through the quarterly corporate performance framework.

RESOLVED that the good outcome of the 2008 annual performance assessment (APA) be noted.

CAB **Economic Climate - Update Report**
122/08

Consideration was given to a report that provided Members with an overview of the current economic climate, outlining the effects that this would have on Stockton Borough, and the mitigations already in place and those being developed in response to this.

A report was submitted to Cabinet in December 2008, which set the scene of the economic downturn, and the effects that the global recession and economic climate were having on businesses, rising unemployment, and mortgage reposessions.

The monthly update report would enable a focussed account to be made of any recent changes to economic circumstances (both positive and negative) the direct impact that this may have on the Borough, and the responses and mitigations either in place or being developed to support businesses and residents. Members were provided with a summary of the economic changes that had taken place.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The report be noted.
2. The work being undertaken be supported.

CAB **Review of the Concierge Security Service**
123/08

Consideration was given to a report regarding the potential changes to the concierge service to reduce costs and assist with de pooling.

The Council's concierge security service 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 1,011 tenants and leaseholders living within the following blocks:-

- * Anson and Hudson House (Thornaby)
- * Hume House and Nolan House (Stockton)
- * Elm House, Campbell Court and Walton Court (Stockton)
- * Kennedy Gardens (blocks 1 to 3) and Dawson House (Billingham)
- * Melsonby Court and Prior Court, Low Grange (Billingham)

The service cost £1,470,890 to run. Costs were divided equally amongst the blocks although there were different numbers of properties in different blocks. The service was financed by a contribution from the overall Housing Revenue Account equating to £792,788 and a weekly service charge to individual residents in receipt of the service of £14.75 (charged over a 48 week period). For those residents who were eligible for housing benefit the service charge cost was met. Approximately 70% of residents in receipt of concierge services were eligible for housing benefit.

Government policy had changed with regard to the pooling of service charges. The current policy was that people should pay directly for the full cost of the services they receive. This policy was enshrined as part of the Government wider policy on rent reform which was contained in the document 'A guide to social rent reforms in the local authority sector' introduced in 2001 and updated in 2006. This document covered a wider set of rules for setting rent within pre determined constraints set by Government to control rent increases and service charges and bring them into line with other rents in the social sector (such as housing association rents). Within the guidance was an acceptance that the total cost of services would not be de pooled overnight as otherwise they would be unaffordable to service users. De pooling must therefore be planned and often staged.

The issue of de pooling was picked up as part of the Audit Commission inspection of Tristar Homes in 2006 with a specific recommendation that the Council integrate value for money into working practices by agreeing more stretching targets for de pooling. At the point of inspection it was outlined to the Audit Commission that the authority intended to de pool service charges over a six year period (in line with the then rent restructuring timetable). It was outlined that in Stockton de pooling could only be achieved by a mixture of reducing

costs via remodelled services and increasing individual service charges. The Audit Commission were unhappy with the timescales for de pooling on the basis that balances on the housing revenue account which could have been available for service improvements were being used to support de pooling.

Two reports had previously been presented to Cabinet on the concierge service on the 2nd November 2006 and 1st February 2007. The first outlined the need to restructure the concierge service to achieve de pooling and the second report sought and gained member agreement to alter the level of concierge service between 1.00 a.m. and 7.00 a.m. to single crewing following a successful pilot and consultation with affected tenants and leaseholders. This latter change to the service resulted in an annual saving to the concierge budget of £140,000.

Steps were now needed to complete the de pooling of the concierge service charge to comply with Government policy. An additional reason to complete de pooling sooner rather than later was that if the stock option appraisal determined that the housing stock be transferred to a housing association the authority needed to de pool prior to transfer. The reason for this was that housing associations could not pool charges and already had to charge tenants for all of their service charge costs. If the service remained as it was at the point of transfer tenants who received the concierge service would receive a significant increase in the cost of their service charge (circa £15.00) which could make their accommodation unaffordable and this needed to be avoided.

Housing, Community Protection and Tristar Homes established a working group to consider the options for de pooling. The individual service increase if we were de pooling the current service would be £15.56 to add to the existing service charge of £14.75 making a total service charge for the concierge service of £30.31. This level of service charge was unlikely to be acceptable to tenants and leaseholders, making the accommodation unaffordable to many. The option that had therefore been developed was to change the existing level of provision generating savings in the region of £500,000 per annum. If this new service was fully in place by April 2010 there would still be a residual charge of £292,788 which would amount to an increase in individual service charges of approximately £6. If this level of service charge was unacceptable to tenants and leaseholders then further reductions in service delivery would be necessary.

The proposed level of cover was a workforce of 22 Concierge Security Officers (pay band D) and three Supervisors (pay band I), structured as follows:-

Day shift (proposed 8 a.m. – 8 pm.)

* One officer on each site, plus one mobile supporting officer (5 officers in total)

* Security Centre – two officers on duty, to cover Elm / Walton / Campbell and provided mobile back-up to the other 4 sites (relief for breaks and extra cover in the event of any incidents)

Night shift (proposed 8p.m. - 8a.m.)

* Security Centre – two officers on duty, monitoring CCTV and provided access control for all 5 sites, plus 2 officers mobile, patrolling all 5 sites.

Day & night shift one Supervisor may also be available as mobile back-up.

It had already been agreed that Supervisory functions were to be merged with Duty Supervisor functions in Security Centre and total number of Supervisors reduced from 10 (4 Concierge plus 6 Security Centre) to 8 (5 charged to General Fund, 3 to Concierge / HRA).

In recent years capital had been invested in improving monitoring equipment and CCTV to make the systems more resilient, with the consequence that such a proposal was feasible. For tenants and leaseholders this would mean that a visible presence on site was maintained during the hours when most residents were up and about, i.e. 8 a.m. until 8 p.m. and patrols of all blocks would be carried out during the night (8 p.m. until 8 a.m.), but the level of cover was generally reduced. Response time to some non emergency incidents may increase.

Where possible, reductions in staffing levels would be met from staff turnover therefore minimising the need to fully pursue redundancy. Wherever possible staff would, subject to a skills audit, be considered for redeployment. Costs for redundancy would need to be paid for as a one off hit on the Housing Revenue Account and would be built into the HRA medium term financial plan. A consultation would take place on the proposal with affected service users, and a report would be brought back to Cabinet in March/April 2009 with feedback from stakeholders and the resulting proposals

RESOLVED that:-

1. The need to de pool concierge charges in line with Government policy be acknowledged.
2. Officers be authorised to commence consultation with affected tenants, staff, and elected members on proposals to remodel the concierge service as detailed in the report.
3. A further report be brought back to members in March/April 2009 detailing the results of the consultation and outlining next steps.

CAB 124/08 2009/10 Annual Rent Increase(Council Housing Stock)

Cabinet considered a report relating to the annual rent increase.

It was noted that the Government had established a framework for the level of rent each Local authority charged its tenants.

It was explained that plans for rent level convergence had changed and the Government had identified 20024/25, however, this could be brought forward in the future.

Members noted that the Government had recommended an average rent increase in Stockton of 6.5%, this equated to an average of £4.02 per week.

Cabinet was recommended to agree the 6.5% average rent increase. A lower

rent increase would result in a charge on the Housing Revenue Account in future years. Members noted that the Housing Revenue Account was likely to be used to fund a range of service improvements and pressures such as Choice Based Lettings, initiatives to tackle anti social behaviour, domestic energy assessments etc.

Members were provided with details illustrating the effect the proposed increase would have on the rents of different property types.

RESOLVED that an average rent increase, for Council homes, of 6.5% be approved for 2009/2010.

CAB 125/08 Stockton Council Museum's Collection Rationalisation

Consideration was given to a report on Stockton Council Museum's Collection Rationalisation. Stockton's Museum collections comprised some 65,000 - 100,000 objects. The bulk of collections were social history but there were notable fine art, weapons and archaeology collections. The collection was of variable quality with much duplication, it did not adequately tell the story of the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees, and the Council could not adequately care for and display much of it.

The Stockton Museum Strategy, accepted by full Council in 2005, and Council's Adults, Leisure and Culture Scrutiny Committee Preston Hall Museum study (2006) had both highlighted the need to rationalise (find another use for, disperse or dispose of) the museum collections. The report sought approval for the necessary Policy to implement and manage this process, and agreement on a method by which items recommended by qualified curatorial staff for rationalisation may be approved by Cabinet. The proposed method followed national Museums Libraries and Archives Association guidance. Items would be assessed against clear criteria and officers' recommendations would be presented to a Members Panel at quarterly meetings.

The 'Stockton Council Museums Collections Rationalisation Policy 2009-2012' was attached to the report.

RESOLVED that:-

1. Stockton Council Museums Collections Rationalisation Policy 2009-2012 be ratified and accepted.
2. The establishment of a Collections Rationalisation Members Panel be agreed comprising 6 Members, made up of 1 each from Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, TIA, IBIS and BIA and advised by officers, with delegated authority from Cabinet to agree the disposal or re-use of unwanted museum collections items, according to the criteria set out in the Stockton Borough Council Museums Collections Rationalisation Policy 2008 - 20012, through a series of quarterly meetings over the period 2009 - 2012.

CAB 126/08 Report of 2007-08 Annual Performance Assessment of Adult Social Care Services

Consideration was given to a report on the 2007-08 Annual Performance Assessment (APA) of Adult Social Care Services. A letter and report from the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) were attached to the report and summarised the findings of the 2008 annual performance assessment for Stockton-on-Tees Council. The performance ratings of the Council were:-

Delivering outcomes: Good
Capacity for improvement: Promising
Performance rating: 2 stars

The APA of social care services for adults was carried out by CSCI. It was based on a range of evidence, including a self-assessment by the authority, performance indicators, other related service inspections, and routine business meetings between CSCI and the Council.

The letter confirmed the outcome of the annual assessment of performance for the 2007-08 period. They were published on 27th November 2008 and must be reported to the Council within two months of this date.

Due to some changes in the performance assessment framework for 2006-07, the areas of judgement which were graded did not all match with the previous performance framework, although the overall star rating system had been maintained (with 0 stars being the poorest and 3 stars the best). The 2 star performance rating was the same as achieved each year since 2002. The judgement on delivering outcomes contributed to the Comprehensive Performance Assessment of the Council.

Members noted that the summary of graded judgements indicated that services were judged to be good across all of the outcome areas; this was an improvement from the 2007 report when there was an 'adequate' rating for 'Improved quality of life'. Capacity to improve was promising, based on assessment of the two strands of Leadership and Commissioning.

The APA report identified many key strengths as well as key areas for improvement. The report was helpful in supporting the Council's own assessment of its performance and in contributing to the review of strategic plans and service improvement plans, to ensure the necessary actions were in place to build on strengths and respond to areas for improvement.

During 2008-09, CSCI would continue to monitor the Council's progress through a programme of meetings between their Business Relationship Manager and senior managers from Adult Social Care Services and the PCT. The outcomes of this monitoring programme would feed into the new CAA (Comprehensive Area Assessment) arrangements, but there would no longer be a separate scored rating for social care services. From the beginning of the 2009/2010 period, there would be a revised national performance assessment framework in place for adult social care, overseen by the new Care Quality Commission (to be formed through merger of CSCI and the Healthcare Commission).

The Council's progress in delivery and improvement of services would continue to be monitored through a range of meetings over the year with regional and national agencies. Progress in addressing performance would be reported to

Cabinet through the quarterly corporate performance framework.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The report be received.
2. The outcome of the 2008 Annual Performance (APA) be noted.

**CAB
127/08 Minutes of Various Bodies**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meetings of Area Partnership Boards.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the following meetings be received/approved, as appropriate:-

Western Area Partnership 27 October 2008
The Billingham Partnership 3 November 2008
St. Ann's Development Board 6 November 2008

**CAB
128/08 Review of Medium Term Financial Plan 2009/10**

Cabinet considered a report that provided an update on the current position of the Medium Term Financial Plan ahead of budget and Council Tax setting. The report outlined a number of unavoidable and potential pressures faced by the Council and suggested a strategy for dealing with those pressures both in the immediate future and into the medium term.

Part of the strategy involved an efficiency, improvement and transformation programme, and an outline of this programme was provided to members.

Recommended to Council that

- 1. the financial position detailed within the report be noted.**
- 2. the principles of the Efficiency, Improvement and Transformation Programme be noted.**

**CAB
129/08 Annual Meeting**

Cabinet considered recommendations from the Members' Advisory Panel relating to the format and protocol of future Annual Council meetings.

It was explained that following notification that, due to planned refurbishment, the Billingham Forum Theatre may not be available for the Annual meeting 2009, the Members' Advisory Panel began consideration of an alternative venue.

Subsequently the Panel learned that the Theatre would be available for 2009, but was unlikely to be available the following year. In view of this the Panel

agreed that the venue for 2009 would remain at Billingham Forum Theatre, but further consideration would be given to a venue for 2010 at future Panel meetings.

It was explained that the Panel also took the opportunity to consider alternative formats for the meeting. The Panel recognised the two distinct aspects of the Annual Meeting, the Business aspect and the Ceremonial aspect.

The Panel considered that, whilst appropriate for the ceremonial aspect of the meeting, and subsequent reception, the Billingham Forum Theatre's physical characteristics did not allow a set up conducive to dealing with Council business. The positioning of the Mayor, on the stage, meant he or she was quite remote from the body of the meeting and vision from the stage into the auditorium was poor. This would hamper the management of the meeting, particularly when unexpected situations arise. It was noted that the Annual Meeting presented the possibility of a substantial number of complicated voting situations meaning there was considerable potential for confusion and/or a protracted/problematic meeting. This could create a negative impression of the day for the Mayor, his family and civic guests.

The view was taken that the format of the meeting could be organised such that it would reduce the chances of the potential problems detailed above occurring, and the Panel identified and considered 4 options.

The Panel discussed the options and supported a version of option 3:-

* Council to meet and elect the Mayor and Deputy Mayor (no ceremony) and undertake all other necessary business required. Guests would receive an invitation, directing them to an alternative room, for refreshments, at a time estimated for the conclusion of that business. Clearly this would be a public meeting and as such guests would still have the option of attending the meeting if they wished.

* At the conclusion of the business part of the Annual Meeting there would be a short break, during which, guests would be invited into the meeting room and a ceremony would take place, to mark the election and installation of the new Mayor.

* At the conclusion of the ceremony the Mayor would invite guests and members to attend the post meeting civic lunch.

It was considered that this new format would assist the smooth running of the Annual Meeting and it was suggested that it be adopted for future Meetings.

RECOMMENDED that Council:-

1. agrees the adoption of the following format for future Annual Meetings:-

*** Council to meet and elect the Mayor and Deputy Mayor (no ceremony) and undertake all other necessary business required. Guests would receive an invitation, directing them to an alternative room, for refreshments, at a time estimated for the conclusion of that business.**

*** At the conclusion of the business part of the Annual Meeting a short Break would be taken, during which, guests would be invited into the meeting room and a ceremony would take place, to mark the election and installation of the new Mayor.**

*** At the conclusion of the ceremony the Mayor would invite guests and members to attend the post meeting civic lunch; and that**

2. the Members' Advisory Panel receives a further report regarding the outcome of using the new format at the 2009 Annual Meeting.

**CAB Parish Boundary Review
130/08**

Cabinet considered a report that outlined action required to complete the Parish Boundary Review undertaken in 2004.

Members were reminded that a Parish Boundary Review had been undertaken in 2004, by the Council, in consultation with all of the Parish Councils within its administrative area. This was to bring the Parish boundaries in line with new warding arrangements for 2005, following a Periodic Electoral Review and the establishment of Billingham Town Council. The proposed changes relating to parish boundaries had been approved by Council in October 2004.

It was explained, however, that it had not been possible for the Secretary of State to introduce all of the changes in time for the 2007 elections and the outstanding proposals were scheduled for introduction in April 2008. In the meantime the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (the 2007 Act) had devolved the power to take decisions about matters such as the creation of parishes and their electoral arrangements from the Secretary of State and the Electoral Commission to local government and local communities in England.

Members noted that the outstanding amendments to parish boundaries from the 2004 Review related to Egglecliffe, Preston-on-Tees, Hilton, Yarm, Stillington & Whitton and Redmarshall (in part). Members considered recommendations, including detailed plans, in line with requirements of the 2007 Act and related guidance, as follows;

Egglecliffe

It was proposed to amend the boundary to place all of the houses in Railway Terrace in Egglecliffe Parish. Currently numbers 24 and 25 Railway Terrace were in Preston on Tees Parish and the remainder of Railway Terrace was in Egglecliffe Parish

Preston-on-Tees

It was proposed to change the boundary in 3 areas:

- (i) To take account of the border of the Cemetery
- (ii) To include the areas of Preston Park and the associated Lodge premises (Polling district EG9) to make the border coterminous with the new ward

boundary for Eaglescliffe.

(iii) This change would place the last 2 houses in Railway Terrace in Egglescliffe Parish

Hilton

There were two proposed changes to the parish boundary:

- (i) To amend slightly the boundary at the South East corner to make the boundary coterminous with the Ingleby Barwick East/Yarm Ward boundary.
- (ii) To delete the “finger” of land in the North East corner to align the boundary.

Yarm

There are two proposed changes to the parish boundary:

- (i) To amend slightly the boundary at the South East corner to make the boundary coterminous with the Ingleby Barwick East/Yarm Ward boundary
- (ii) Minor changes were proposed along the parish boundary to align the boundary with Green Lane.

Stillington and Whitton

A change was proposed at Whitton Bridge, to align the boundary with the river

Redmarshall

A change was proposed at Whitton Bridge, to align the boundary with the river (mirror image of Stillington and Whitton)

If Council agreed with the review recommendations then a decision would be published to ensure that anyone interested in the review were informed of the decision and the reasons for it.

The Council would then make an order and, as soon as practicable after making the order, would deposit it at its principal office together with a map for public inspection.

As soon as practicable after making the order, the Council would inform the following that the order had been made—

- (a) the Secretary of State;
- (b) the Electoral Commission;
- (c) the Office of National Statistics;
- (d) the Director General of the Ordnance Survey;
- (e) any other principal council whose area the order relates to.

RECOMMENDED to Council that

1. no further new parishes be established as a result of the review.

2. none of the parishes under review should be abolished, but that the area of the parish should be altered in each case to reflect the outstanding changes to the parish areas identified within the report, detailed in

paragraphs 6 to 11 and shown on the plans at Appendices 1 to 5.

3. all of the parishes under review should continue to have a council and none of the names of the parishes should be altered.

4. that no alterations to any of the related electoral arrangements should be made;

5. an order is made and deposited at the principal office for public inspection as required by the 2007 Act; and that

6. as soon as practicable after making the order, the council inform the relevant parties (as detailed in section 96 of the 2007 Act) that the order has been made.

**CAB
131/08 Review of Operation of English National Concessionary Travel Scheme**

Consideration was given to a report that advised Cabinet of the progress of the introduction of the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) since its introduction on 1st April, to seek approval for changes in the administration of the scheme locally and to advise of the financial implications of operation of the scheme for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.

Cabinet was reminded that, within Stockton on Tees, operation of ENCTS contained a local enhancement that removed all restrictions on the time of travel.

Bus operators and Tees Valley Authorities wished to keep the operation of ENCTS under close review and it was suggested that any agreement only be for a maximum of two years from 1st April 2009.

It was explained that the Government was currently reviewing the operation of ENCTS, but any outcomes from this was not expected until after 2009. In view of this it was suggested that any changes recommended to the ENCTS by the Government or local authorities be the subject of a further report to Cabinet.

Members were provided with details relating to the number of passes issued to Borough residents and noted the issues arising from the first year of operation. Issues included:-

- * Lost passes and replacement costs
- * Qualification on the grounds of disability.
- * Companions travelling with people with disabilities.
- * Extending opportunities for people to apply for passes in libraries and other outlets.

Members were provided with financial information relating to the operation of the scheme.

RESOLVED that:-

1. Approval be given to seeking continuing participation in the Tees Valley wide

enhancement to the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) offering free travel within and between the areas covered by Stockton-on-Tees, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland Borough Councils at any time of day. Continuation of the any time of day enhancement to be subject to the participation of other Tees Valley authorities and available budgets.

2. It be noted that negotiation would be based upon a two year deal but the final duration of any arrangement would be subject to the agreement of all parties.

3. Any agreed continuation of the any time of day enhancement, enabling travel at any time, operates for a one-year period commencing on 1st April 2009.

4. A charge of £5 for replacing a first lost pass and £10 for replacing subsequent lost passes be introduced, together with delegated authority to waive the fee under exceptional circumstances to be given to the Head of Technical Services.

5. A further report be presented to Cabinet recommending the best means by which the Department for Transport's recommendations on the use of occupational therapists or physiotherapists for carrying out eligibility assessments could be achieved.

6. The issue of whether to operate a local enhancement, enabling companions of disabled pass holders to travel free of charge, be deferred until the recommendations of the national working party on funding and concessions are known.

7. No further local enhancements be approved at this stage.

8. Members note that access to the ENCTS is to be improved by extending the ability to apply for passes to libraries and other outlets as appropriate.

9. The operation of the scheme be kept under review and any further proposed changes to the ENCTS recommended either locally or by the working parties set up by the Department for Transport be the subject of a further report to Cabinet.