

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting19th February 2009

1. Title of Item/Report

Efficiency, Improvement and Transformation Programme

2. Record of the Decision

Further to the reported downturn in the national economy and its impact on the borough's Medium Term Financial Plan, consideration was given to a proposed new Council approach to driving improvement and efficiency. The proposed approach would refine current approaches to performance and financial management, placing residents' needs and efficiency at the heart of the council.

A three year programme of efficiency and improvement reviews was proposed across all the Council's activities and consideration was given to the proposed approach to these reviews. It would also mark the beginning of a development phase for the Council as it followed a period where the Council had been nationally recognised for its high performance and forward thinking, where resident satisfaction was generally high and where quality of life for local people had improved. Even without the financial drivers for improved efficiencies, this programme was needed in order to maintain high performance, continue to improve satisfaction and enable further improvement across the borough.

The objectives of the Efficiency, Improvement and Transformation (EIT) programme, considered by Cabinet at its January meeting, were:

-To improve services while reducing costs enabling the Council to manage its Medium Term Financial Plan effectively;

-To improve resident satisfaction;

-To further develop the council's service focus, excellence, improvement and efficiency culture;

-To maximise the potential of partnership working to improve efficiency and delivery to residents and service users;

- To ensure the Council remains high performing and that the borough is seen as high performing in the new Comprehensive Area Assessment;
- To develop service delivery models which will be effective in meeting the changing needs of our communities e.g. the needs of an aging population.

The principles embedded within the review framework were:-

- Member involvement throughout
- Resident focus
- Innovation
- Service focus
- Efficiency focus
- Performance focus
- Doing more, better, for less or maybe not doing it at all
- Future proofing the council
- Effective project management.

The Efficiency and Improvement strands of the programme would be delivered through a whole Council review programme. Reviews would be carried out which encompassed every function whether delivered directly or through commissioned / contracted services. Some reviews would be of discreet services or groups of services such as a review of youth services; others would be of themes which affect a range of services / areas of the Council such as advice and information services.

Councillors would be involved in every review. Some reviews or elements of reviews would be carried out by Scrutiny Committees as part of the Scrutiny Work Programme. For reviews not carried out by Scrutiny Committees there would be two ways of involving non-Executive Councillors in the reviews. The first is through allocating a Scrutiny Committee to each efficiency and improvement review. The allocated Committee would receive progress reports at its meetings enabling members to challenge the progress and findings of the review. The second option is for a Scrutiny Committee or a specially formed task and finish group of councillors to be involved in a “gateway” review of the findings of the challenge and procurement modules. This would enable members to test the findings of these two critical stages in the review, challenging their robustness before they are reported to Cabinet. Cabinet members would be involved in all reviews relating to their portfolio.

Details were submitted of how the three following main stages of the review framework would operate:-

- Challenge
- Procurement
- Business Process Re-engineering (simplifying the way we do things to make them more efficient).

Every aspect of the Council's work would need to be covered by the review programme. There would be two review programmes – one for reviews to be carried out by Scrutiny Committees and one for reviews to be carried out by officers with scrutiny committee involvement.

The Scrutiny review programme for 2009/10 would be developed as normal through the identification of potential review areas, assessment against the PICK (Public interest, Impact on the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area, Council performance and efficiency, Keep in context) criteria, discussion of priorities at the Scrutiny Liaison Forum and decision by Executive Scrutiny together with allocation of each review to an appropriate Scrutiny Committee. Greater weighting would be applied to reviews with an efficiency focus in the PICK criteria.

The programme of efficiency and improvement reviews to be carried out by officers would be developed over the coming weeks and brought to Cabinet in March alongside the Council Plan and Service Improvement Plans for approval. This programme would then be used by Executive Scrutiny Committee to decide which option for scrutiny involvement to apply to each review. The review programme would be firm for the first year (2009/10) and indicative for the following two years.

Progress in delivering the Scrutiny work programme would be monitored as normal by the Executive Scrutiny Committee. Progress in delivering the officer review programme would be monitored by a "programme board" of senior officers and reported to Cabinet and Executive Scrutiny on a quarterly basis. Progress with the reviews would also be outlined at the regular "policy update" members seminars.

RESOLVED that the proposed managed approach to improvement and efficiency over the medium term, be approved.

3. Reasons for the Decision

In order to manage within the medium term financial plan, the council would need to improve both the efficiency and quality of its services. The report outlined an approach to efficiency and improvement reviews to enable this improvement and efficiency.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected
None
5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest
None
6. Details of any Dispensations
Not Applicable
7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed
Not later than Midnight on Friday, 27th February 2009

Proper Officer
27 February 2009