

Cabinet

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday, 9th July, 2009.

Present: Cllr Ken Lupton (Chairman, Cllr Mrs Jennie Beaumont, Cllr David Coleman, Cllr Robert Cook, Cllr Alex Cunningham, Cllr Terry Laing, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Mrs Mary Womphrey

Officers: N. Schneider (CEO); D.E. Bond, M. Henderson (LD); J.Danks, E. Chesworth (R); S. Daniels, R. Poundford (DNS); S. McLurg, R. Kench (CESC)

Also in attendance: Cllr Mrs Jean Kirby, Cllr Mrs Maureen Rigg, Cllr Ken Dixon and Cllr Jim Beall

Apologies:

CAB 52/09 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Mrs Beaumont declared a personal non prejudicial interest in this item as she was a Governor of one of the schools referred to in the report.

Councillor Nelson and Councillor Mrs McCoy declared a personal, non prejudicial interest in this item as they served on the Stockton and District Advice and Information Service Board.

Councillors Lupton and Mrs Womphrey each declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in respect of this item as a result of their membership of Tees Active Ltd.

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CAB 53/09 **Local Authority Representatives on School Governing Bodies**

In accordance with the procedure for the appointment of school governors, approved at Minute 84 of the Cabinet (11th May 2000), Cabinet were requested to approve the nominations to school Governing Bodies as detailed within the report.

RESOLVED that appointments be made to the vacant Governorships subject to successful List 99 check and Personal Disclosure, as follows:-

Bader Primary School – Mrs B Robinson (Lab)
Frederick Nattrass Primary School – Mr J Cooping
Grangefield School Mr K Price, Mrs C Whiteside
Kirklevington Primary School Mr D Mukherjee

Layfield Primary School Mr A Brown
Northfield School and Sports College Ray McCall
Our Lady St Bede's RC School Mr K Founders (Lab)
Pentland Primary School Mr M Burnett (Lab)
The Oak Tree Primary School Cllr R Gibson (Lab)
Wolviston Primary School – Mrs J Watt (Lab)

CAB 54/09 CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE WORKLOAD PRESSURES

It was explained that following the death of Baby Peter in Haringey and the subsequent progress report by Lord Laming, many Local Authorities across the country have reported an upsurge in the numbers of social care referrals being received.

In addition the current economic climate had, at least been partially responsible for this rise, as financial hardship puts families under increased pressure and stress.

This trend had been mirrored locally with a marked rise in the number of referrals. Members were provided with figures demonstrating this and it was noted that this rise had translated into significant workload pressures throughout the social care system.

Members considered a report that provided a brief overview of pressures, as of 31 May 2009. Updates would be provided to Cabinet on a bi monthly basis.

Members were informed of issues surrounding staffing and allocations and noted the national shortage of qualified and experienced social workers. Most local authorities had reported difficulty in recruitment and retention and Stockton was no different, both at social work practitioner and management levels.

In an effort to address the need for social workers Stockton had introduced a cadetship scheme, which aimed at attracting young people to social work, as a profession, and provided support in developing their skills. Also, to attract suitable applicants to certain posts, the Council had introduced 'golden hellos' which were paid to post holders on a staggered basis.

It was noted that the general recruitment issues and increasing pressures described in the report caused difficulties in terms of allocation of workloads. Members were provided with brief details of how workload pressures were currently being managed. In addition details of the potential budgetary impact the increased referrals would have were provided.

Recognising the importance of the issues described in the report Cabinet asked that it be specifically highlighted and circulated to all Members of the Council. Cabinet Members also asked for further information about the Cadetship scheme in terms of numbers involved and its structure. Additionally, it was requested that officers look into the possibility of producing quarterly information, on a ward basis, for circulation to ward Councillors, briefly detailing referral trends and any positive results coming from interventions/work undertaken by social care workers. Members were keen that this information should only be collated if easily available and should not place a burden on the

teams directly associated with the issues described in the report.

RESOLVED that:-

1.the increase in social care referrals, children subject to a child protection plan, looked after children and the associated impact this is having on workload and budget be noted.

2.further update reports be received on a bi monthly basis in order to monitor the current rise in workload pressures.

**CAB
55/09 Economic Climate Update**

Consideration was given to a report that provided Members with an overview of the current economic climate, outlining the effects that this was having on Stockton Borough, 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 repossessions.

The monthly update report enabled a focussed account to be made of the changes to economic circumstances, the direct impact that this may be having on the Borough, and the responses and mitigations either in place or being developed to support businesses and residents. A summary was provided to members noting the economic changes and both the positive and negative of this that had occurred since their previous update on 14th May 2009.

The Appendix to the report was discussed outlining the following areas: Employment and Business which highlighted the latest positives and negatives in Engineering, Manufacturing, Chemical, Service and Retail Sectors. In addition to this Economic Indicators, Economic Measures, Housing and Development were also discussed finishing with Stockton Borough Councils Responses.

Cabinet was supplied with an update to the report relating to announcements made since the issue of papers and affecting local employers including PetroPlus, Dow Chemicals and Croda Chemicals.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted and the work undertaken to date be supported.

**CAB
56/09 SPORT & ACTIVE LEISURE STRATEGY**

Consideration was given to approval of a draft Sport & Active Leisure Strategy for the borough, which was proposed to be the subject of public consultation.

It was noted that sport and active leisure had a unique capacity to bring together people of different generations, cultures and backgrounds, capable of

improving health, being a source of new friendships, used to tackle exclusion and isolation, and to engage those who otherwise may become involved in anti-social behaviour and be a key component in urban regeneration. The Sport & Active Leisure Strategy brought together planning for the facilities and the activities they made possible, to maximise the opportunities for participation.

The Strategy had been produced in order to provide a commonly agreed direction for sport within the Borough for the next five years. It is a Strategy not only for Stockton Council but one for our partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors. It builds upon many related policies and existing partnerships, and aims to provide quality opportunities for participation in sport and active leisure in order to meet the needs and aspirations of the entire community. Whereas previous strategies have dealt primarily with facilities, this document attempts to connect the facilities and the activity they make possible, toward our community wellbeing outcomes. It has been developed by the Leisure & Sports Development Service in collaboration with key partners.

The Strategy would also contribute to the delivery of the following nationally identified priorities:

- Increases in the % of 5-16 year olds participating in 5 hours of PE/ within the curriculum and OOSH
- Increase % of adults participating in at least 30 min's of moderate intensity sport and physical activity on at least 3 or more days per week (CPA/ NI8)
- Increased resident satisfaction with sports & leisure services within the borough
- Increase in the number of people volunteering in sport (CPA Culture Block/ LAA)
- Increase in the % of residents living with 20 min's of a quality accredited leisure facility
- An increase in the % of people participating in local authority sport/ recreation provision.

Members noted that consultation would not be limited and Members were invited to advise officers of any groups they felt should be consulted.

Discussion also took place with regard to

- the limited, Council provided, swimming facilities in the South of the Borough.
- developing transport links to communities to assist all residents in accessing sports facilities.

RESOLVED that:-

1. the Sport & Active Leisure Strategy be approved as a Consultation Draft so that interested organisations and individuals can provide comment and challenge through consultation.
2. the Head of Culture & Leisure, in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Member for Arts Leisure & Culture , be authorised to approve the release of the Draft Leisure Facilities Plan, Draft Leisure Activities Plan, and Draft Leisure Events, Information & Communication Plan, upon their completion, for consultation as supporting documents to the Draft Sport & Active Leisure

Strategy.

**CAB
57/09** **Free Swimming**

Consideration was given to a report that updated members on how the FREE Swimming initiative had been received since its inception on 1st April 09.

The FREE Swimming initiative funded primarily by Central Government via the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) started on the 1st April 2009, with free swimming being available at the Splash, Billingham Forum and Thornaby Pool facilities.

The initiative had proved very popular and had seen 24,747 free swims throughout April/ May 2009 (20,681 – U16 / 4,066 – Over 60). This was an overall increase of 2,888 for the same period in 2008, which may be attributable to the FREE Swimming initiative. This equated to a 13% increase in swimming participation in the target age ranges.

Tees Active Ltd (TAL) had issued over 11,000 swipe cards in the first two and half months of the FREE Swimming initiative, which indicated that the scheme had been very well received. At this stage it was not know how many of the participants were residents of the borough although TAL would be providing this information following comprehensive analysis of quarter 1 of the programme.

As a consequence of signing up to the FREE Swimming initiative for Under 16's and Over 60's, the Council became eligible to bid for a share of £25m nationally for capital improvements to swimming facilities. This was through Round 1 of the FREE Swimming Capital Modernisation Programme (CMP). The Council had been fortunate enough to receive an allocation of £300,000 from the CMP towards the development of a movable floor at Billingham Forum and to develop additional family changing at Splash. The Council had also been advised that nationally there was a £2m under-spend from the Round 1 CMP so officers were assembling an additional submission to support the Billingham Forum scheme.

The scheme would from a revenue point of view cost the Council in the region of £22,000 over the two years. However this had not only provided social and health benefits to residents, it had also yielded to date £300,000 in capital investment into swimming facilities, with the opportunity for more through the CMP.

Splash had by far been the most frequented of the 3 TAL operated swimming facilities in the borough. As Splash was the only facility within Teesside offering slides and a wave machine as part of its offer user numbers had consistently been very high, resulting in the facility being at times unable to maintain the levels of cleanliness that TAL pride themselves on.

There was an opportunity to bid for additional capital resource through Round 2 of the FREE Swimming CMP. Officers were looking at options as to how a bid for a share of this funding could benefit the facilities within the borough. As there was only £25m nationally it was not realistic to look at funding new facilities due

to the levels of funding that would be available from this programme (max. £300,000 - £500,000).

With regards to the success of FREE Swimming in other local authorities, this information was being sought and would be available following the release of data for the first quarter.

RESOLVED that:-

1. the increase in swimming participation by Under 16's and Over 60's be noted.
2. Officers pursue additional capital funding from the FREE Swimming Capital Modernisation Programme, to secure further improvements to existing facilities.

CAB **Sustainable Communities Act**
58/09

Consideration was given to information provided for members on the Sustainable Communities Act, summarising consultation activity that had taken place to date and proposing recommendations for submitting proposals of intent to the Local Government Association (LGA).

The Sustainable Communities Act had cross party support and received Royal Assent on 23rd October 2007 with the aim of promoting the sustainability of local communities. Key to the act was the opportunity for local authorities to ask central government for permission to take action in their area which they were currently unable to do. This could include the delegation of functions from national or local bodies and agencies to the local authority and was designed, in part, to support the Council in delivering its power of well-being duty from the 2000 Local Government Act. The scope of the act covered social, economic and environmental issues and as such there was wide scope as to what could be proposed. Ideas generated by localities would be fed through a selector (confirmed as the LGA) who would prepare a shortlist for submission to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

Local authorities had been invited by the Secretary of State to make proposals they considered would improve the sustainability of local communities. Those proposals had to be within the confines of the act, but there was some flexibility in what an authority saw as necessary to promote the sustainability of its area. Approval for proposals would be granted through a process of negotiation between the Secretary of State and the Selector Panel who would act as champion and advocate for the proposals.

In order to ensure that any potential proposals were in line with Council policy and had included consultation with the community, a number of activities had been undertaken with a view to developing proposals. They included:

- Presentation at Members Policy Seminar
- Consultation with Area and thematic partnerships of the LSP
- Special meeting of SRCGA community reference group
- Consideration of recommendations from recent scrutiny reviews
- Presentation to Parish Council Liaison Forum

A full list of suggestions arising from these activities are shown below:

- Having stronger powers to deal with the problems associated with alcohol misuse
- Speeding up the processes for and have stronger powers around regenerating derelict land and buildings
- Public transport, particularly bus services, being strictly regulated and that local authorities should act as the regulator in their areas
- Having greater freedoms locally around the definition of green and brownfield sites
- Having stronger powers around preventing demolition of properties and preventing householders selling land to build new homes in back gardens
- Allowing local authorities and their communities greater say in criminal justice, particularly sentencing and community payback
- Acquiring additional powers around dispersal orders
- Ensuring all planning decisions are made locally
- Ensuring appropriate political representation on Police Authorities

Nationally, 117 authorities had indicated that they were considering putting proposals forward, although none had actually submitted in advance of the 31st July deadline and details of what those areas were considering remained limited. Reviews through existing networks had identified the following examples of suggestions from consultations undertaken elsewhere:

- Supporting local post offices to avoid closure
- Supporting development of small scale renewable energy initiatives
- Stopping plastic packaging
- Enforcing minimal lighting of offices and public buildings out of hours
- Increased powers to deal with pavement parking
- Retention of revenue from business rates to be spent on local priorities
- Retention of landfill credits to reinvest in local priorities

If this Council was to make a proposal, it would need to be submitted to the LGA by 31st July 2009. A copy of the assessment criteria to be used by the Selector Panel was submitted. With regard to the suggestions coming forward from this Council's consultation in the community, none of the suggestions put forward through the consultation had been subject to the challenge of meeting the requirements of the Act. Whilst some of the suggestions reflected areas of concern to local communities they did not meet one of the fundamental requirements of the Act i.e. Councils did not have the power to act. The proposals would however be developed by a working group of officers from relevant service areas and partners who would challenge whether they met the requirement of the Act. It was proposed that the Chief Executive would then, in conjunction with the Group Leaders and Portfolio Holder for Access and Communities, approve any submission to LGA in advance of the July 31st deadline.

RESOLVED that:-

1. the report be noted.
2. the further work necessary to develop any potential proposals to ensure they comply with the requirements of the Act be approved.

the final approval of proposals be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Group Leaders and Portfolio Holder for Access and Communities.

**CAB
59/09** **Minutes of Variuos Bodies**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meetings of Various Bodies.

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

Western Area Partnership Board 27th April 2009
St Ann's Development Board 7th May 2009
Housing and Neighbourhood Partnership 19th May April 2009

**CAB
60/09** **Q4 Improvement Report - Finance/Performance**

This report outlines the Council's service and financial performance for the full year from April 2008 to 31ST March 2009 highlighting achievements, areas for improvement, consultation activity undertaken, complaints, commendations and comments and outturn against revenue and capital budgets.

In October 2006, the local government white paper, "strong and prosperous communities" highlighted some changes to the way that Government would assess and monitor the performance of councils and their partners. These changes were included in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

It was explained that as the new performance framework continued to embed, robust performance management systems remained in place across the Council to monitor achievement against objectives and targets set. The Corporate Management Team retained its focus on service performance as well as monitoring progress in implementing this new performance framework.

Cabinet was provided with a picture of the Council's performance against the Local Area Agreement, the Council Plan, the National Indicator set as well as detail on the achievements made through the Equality Impact Assessments and the implementation of the Single Equality Scheme. The report also included detail of resident feedback and consultation activity. A series of appendices had been prepared to the report to provide members with a full picture of performance. The appendix had previously been could be accessed via e genda.

Cabinet considered the position of the MTFP for each service as at March 2009 and noted the major reasons for any movements from the previously reported position.

It was noted that the Council's net working balances stood at 14.9 million.

It was explained that the position for the medium term was uncertain in its scope but what was certain was that it would be difficult and challenging. Since the

MTFP for 2009/10 had been agreed in February the Budget Speech had exposed the scale of public sector borrowing and announced reductions in overall public sector expenditure. There were no details on the actual impact for Local Government services. There was however general agreement that from 2011/12 it would be facing negative grant settlements, the only question being how large these cuts would be. Stockton needed to start planning now for a course of action to ensure it was able to respond positively to these challenges. The Efficiency, Improvement and Transformation Programme that had already been initiated would undoubtedly contribute to the solution, but the deficits now envisaged would be much larger than when this was originated and thoughts needed to turn to alternative actions that would supplement this. Given these concerns it was considered appropriate, at this time, that the Council did not utilise balances, and continued to review the position on a quarterly basis, as part of the updates on the Medium Term Financial Plan.

RECOMMENDED to Council that:-

- 1. the overall report be noted.**
- 2.the current progress in implementing the new Performance Framework be noted.**
- 3. the revised MTFP be noted.**
- 4. the level of working balances be noted.**

**CAB
61/09**

Brunswick Chapel

Consideration was given to an update on progress made to date and proposed future actions with regard to addressing the deterioration of the fabric of the Brunswick Chapel, 45 Dovecot Street, Stockton-on-Tees.

RESOLVED that:-

1. Cabinet note that Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) has made sustained efforts to work with interested parties to secure a future for the building and to seek a solution to the risk posed by the deteriorating condition of the building.
2. Cabinet agree that the condition of the structure is such that it is not acceptable to do nothing.
3. Cabinet note the ability to secure English Heritage (EH) grant funding is not certain due to competition from other projects, regionally and nationally.
4. Cabinet receive a future report describing the issues presented by the listed buildings at risk within the SBC area.

RECOMMENDED to Council that:-

5. Council agree to Recommendation 5 as detailed in the Cabinet report of 9th July 2009.

