

EIT - Gateway Review of Property and Facilities Management

Response of the Arts, Leisure and Culture Select Committee

The Committee met on 29 July and 18 November 2009 to consider, comment and challenge the information that was provided by the officer project team which were undertaking the review of Property and Facilities Management.

An interim baseline explained how Stockton Borough Council's Property and Facilities Management was currently operating and what assets were currently held. It was shown that a lack of consistency existed for the maintenance to buildings owned by Stockton Borough Council as alternative approaches were used depending on which service area was responsible.

Members questioned the level of expenditure for 08/09 and agreed with the Consultancy Practice Manager that a possible contributory factor could be the large number of suppliers used across the authority. It was suggested that by reducing the list of suppliers there was a potential of savings to be made by reducing the back office processes required to administer and maintain the current suppliers. It was also suggested that bulk discounts may be sought if the supplier list was reduced.

Members were informed that the two areas of the authority which controlled the largest proportion of buildings were Children Education and Social Care (CESC), and Land and Property. The Consultancy Practice Manager had had discussions with the Responsible Officers which had highlighted the following issues:

- 1) The number of differing procedures being used to carry out similar functions within one building and by many personnel.
- 2) The possibility of risks to the authority posed by inconsistencies in current procedures and the need for legislation to be followed correctly.
- 3) Number of contracts eg cleaning.
- 4) Staffing issues.
- 5) Underused buildings and rationalisation of buildings.

It was identified that CESC was following good practice in relation to Facilities Management and it was suggested that elements could be implemented across the rest of the authority. Members recognised that schools have a degree of autonomy and that secondary schools generally have greater facilities management resources than primary schools placing less reliance on Council services.

Members discussed the possibility of creating an inventory of all office equipment enabling the utilisation of available resources. The possibilities of shared options across the Tees Valley was also discussed although it was highlighted by the Consultancy Practice Manager that this may have associated risks and would need further investigation. The Committee were aware of that the North East Purchasing Organisation (NEPO) was to investigate working with neighbouring authorities in relation to this review topic.

The Committee also posed the following questions which were to be considered when completing the options challenge for this review.

- 1) Should all assets be centralised with an asset management team?
- 2) Does every employee need a dedicated computer and desk? (To be considered within the Work wise initiative.)

Options Challenge

The Committee was presented with a number of options that had been developed for consideration by Cabinet as follows:

Option 1) Internal restructure.

Option 2) Running the service in conjunction with another/multiple neighbouring authorities.

Option 3) Outsource the service to an outside provider.

The Committee agreed that option 1 and 2 should be investigated further, it was also stated that whatever was finally agreed would need to operate alongside the Local Education Partnership in relation to the Property and Facilities Management of Schools.