

Cabinet

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday, 10th June, 2010.

Present: Cllr Ken Lupton(Chairman), Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Robert Cook, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Mrs Mary Womphrey

Officers: N. Schneider (CEO), J. Danks (R) J. Humphreys, T. Beckwith, S. McLurg (CESC) P. Dobson, R. McGuckin, R. Poundford, M. Batty, M. Chicken (DNS); D. Bond, M. Waggott, F. McKie

Also in attendance: R. Hill (PCT)

Apologies: Cllr Mrs Jennie Beaumont, Cllr David Coleman and Cllr Terry Laing

CAB Declarations of Interest

18/10

Councillor Mrs McCoy and Councillor Nelson declared a personal prejudicial interest in the item entitled Economic Climate Update Report as they both served on the Stockton and District Advice and Information Service Board of Governors.

CAB Efficiency, Improvement and Transformation Review of Domestic Violence

19/10

Members considered a report that presented the findings of the EIT Review of Domestic Violence, which was a 'reporting in' review to Executive Scrutiny Committee.

It was explained that the majority of Domestic Violence Services were provided by Harbour, a registered charity that, in addition to Stockton, ran refuges in Hartlepool, Middlesbrough and Peterlee. Services were also provided by a Domestic Violence Coordinator (jointly funded by this Council and Hartlepool Borough Council) and a specialist team in the Council's Children and Social Care Service. A copy of baseline/challenge information considered as part of the review was provided.

Cabinet was reminded that the Audit Commission had noted a rise in caseload of approximately 20% from 2007 to 2009 and had stated that it would examine the issues as part of year 2 of the Comprehensive Area Assessment. Figures from Harbour indicated even larger increases. Audit Commission research predicted further increases as the recession developed.

Members noted that the Government had launched its new National Strategy on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). The Strategy encapsulates 75 'key actions' and would lead to a significant increase in expectations of requirements from local authorities and some of their key partners

It was explained that a review of the Council's specialist Domestic Violence Team within CESC had identified issues that suggested that the current service model should be changed. The preferred service model was that the Domestic Violence Team be disbanded and a specialist Domestic Violence function be provided within an enhanced Duty Team.

Cabinet was provided with an analysis of expenditure on Domestic Violence covering the four Teesside authorities together with benchmarking across the

Tees Valley in respect of the costs to the Supporting People budget of both Refuge and Floating Support Services.

In relation to the increase in caseload, which has given rise to a waiting list for some services, Harbour had been asked to analyse how much additional funding would be required to operate without a significant waiting list, based on current (2009/10) levels of demand, and had provided the following figures:-

adults - £77,000
children - £50,000

One of the significant problems identified through the review process, and reported to the Domestic Violence Strategy Group, had been the insufficiency of Refuge capacity. The Stockton Refuge was owned by Endeavour Housing Association, which retained responsibility for maintaining the shell of the building, and was operated by Harbour, who paid a fee to Endeavour for the use of the building, and was available for use by women and children only. In 2008/09 132 of 209 referrals i.e. 63%, were declined due to no places being available at the time of referral. Women accepted as priority homeless on the grounds of domestic violence, who could not be accommodated in the refuge due to capacity, and all men in similar circumstances were placed in the St. James' Street hostel or satellite accommodation, all managed by Three Rivers Housing Association. This issue had been discussed by a task group for the purpose, and the possibility of establishing a cluster of intermediate accommodation, within close proximity of the existing refuge (so as to minimise disruption of schooling for children, and to facilitate efficient staffing arrangements, i.e. 'satellite' provision from the existing staff team at the refuge) was now being explored in further detail, with colleagues at Tristar Homes and Harbour. The Supporting People team had given a preliminary indication that a further £40–50,000 per year of Supporting People funding may be available for a strong proposal which would reduce 'bed blocking' at the refuge itself and assist service users to return to independent living more quickly (reducing the average stay in the refuge itself from about six months to about three months, thereby effectively doubling refuge capacity). An ancillary option being investigated was moving the Harbour Outreach Service from its current base in rented office accommodation in Stockton Town Centre to a property in any such cluster, so as to save on costs of rent and maximise staffing efficiencies.

Following discussions with Cabinet Members concerned some years ago, it was agreed that the Cabinet Members for Housing & Community Safety and for Adult Services and Health would participate in the multi-agency Domestic Violence Strategy Group. Following more recent discussions it was also recommended that the Cabinet Member for Children & Young People become a member of the group.

Cabinet was provided with the comments of Executive Scrutiny Committee relating to the review.

RESOLVED that :-

1. in the current climate it would be inadvisable to look for net reductions in the Council's expenditure on domestic violence services, but that efforts should continue to maximise the impact of investment

2. the position in respect of the Domestic Violence Team within CESC be noted.
3. all Council services ensure that they are represented at an appropriate level at the multi-agency Domestic Violence Strategy Group, and that their activities and performance are reported to the Group in a timely manner
4. the Strategy Group should review its links with other multi-agency partnership bodies including the Safer Stockton Partnership, the Children's Trust Board, the Health & Wellbeing Partnership, the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the Adult Safeguarding Board, and the links between the Domestic Violence Strategy for the Borough and other key strategies developed by these partnerships.
5. the Cabinet Member for Children & Young People be added to the Council representatives on the Domestic Violence Strategy Group alongside the Cabinet Members for Housing & Community Safety and for Adult Services & Health, as Member Champions for domestic violence services.

**CAB
20/10**

LA Nominations

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:-

Bewley Junior School – Mrs M Rees

Conyers School – Miss Shelagh Leonard

Junction Farm Primary School – Mr N. J. Vaughan

St Cuthbert's RC Primary School – Mr S. Dowson

**CAB
21/10**

Children's Social Care Workload Pressures

Cabinet was advised of the latest position with regard to the recent growth in the number of social care referrals being received by the Council.

The number of referrals and assessments during January and March 2010 had continued to rise sharply. Members were provided with a table demonstrating this trend. This had placed the service under extreme pressure and would impact on key performance indicators.

The overall number of children who were subject to a child protection plan had remained at a high level and the total number of looked after children had

increased significantly to a peak of 289 in March.

Reference was made to staffing issues and it was noted that the situation in terms of vacant social work posts had deteriorated further.

Members noted that as at 25 May there were 9 children in need, 7 child protection and 4 looked after children cases unallocated.

The budgetary impact of the pressures continued to have an impact on key areas and was being considered as part of the overall Medium Term Financial Plan. Members noted the overspends involved.

Members were provided with the final action plan arising from the unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements in the Borough. It was noted that most of the actions had been completed and fully implemented. Outstanding actions would be carried into mainstream business planning processes,

Cabinet noted that the Social Work Taskforce 'Building a Safe, Confident Future' addressing key areas. A Reform Board had been established to take forward the 15 recommendations made by the Taskforce. The Reform Board had asked all Local Authorities introducing a voluntary health check across adult and children's services. The North East Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership had established a project team to support all 12 local authorities in the region.

RESOLVED that :-

1. the continued workload pressures within the social care system and the associated impact this was having on caseloads, performance and budget be noted.
2. further update reports be received on a quarterly basis in order to continue to monitor the impact of these workload pressures.
3. the final action plan arising from the unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements in Stockton-on-Tees which took place on 5 and 6 January 2010 be noted.

**CAB
22/10**

Supply of Primary School Places Across the Borough

Cabinet considered a report and addendum detailing issues surrounding the supply of primary school places across the Borough.

It was explained that between 1999 and 2009 the number of primary school pupils in the borough fell by almost 3,000. During that time the pupil capacity of many primary schools was reduced, and 1,700 places were removed in order to maintain the level of unfilled places at around 10% overall.

Members noted that the latest projections (based on January 2010 data) showed a rising trend in the number of pupils of primary school age in the borough beginning in September 2010 and continuing for at least four years.

It seemed likely that pupil numbers would rise more rapidly than projected last year. The number of applications for reception places in September 2010 was over 100 greater than projected. In some areas of the borough there would be very few vacant reception places in September. There was now a need to identify options for increasing capacity in those areas of the borough for 2011 and beyond, and to consider how those options might be funded. Members were provided with brief details of some possible options.

In all areas of the borough the number of pupils attending Catholic schools was projected to increase beyond present capacity. It would be necessary to discuss possible options with the two Catholic dioceses.

RESOLVED that the present position, that options be developed to ensure a sufficient supply of places in all areas of the Borough taking into account the availability of resources be noted and that a further report be submitted to Cabinet later in the year.

**CAB
23/10** **Economic Climate Update Report**

Cabinet considered a monthly update report providing members with an overview of the current economic climate, outlining the effects that this was having on Stockton Borough, and the mitigations already in place and those being developed.

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

**CAB
24/10** **Tees Valley Transport Schemes**

Cabinet was provided with a position statement with regard to the Tees Valley Bus Network Improvements, Tees Valley Metro and Thornaby Station footbridge replacement.

Tees Valley Bus Network Improvements

It was explained that the revised Tees Valley Bus Network Improvements Major Scheme Business Case would receive DfT funding of £37.498m. The scheme had an estimated full cost of £57.236m and the shortfall would be made up of local contributions from the five Tees Valley Authorities and third parties.

The project would be delivered over a four financial years with Year 1 being 2010/11. A public information document that had been prepared by Tees Valley Unlimited was provided to Cabinet.

Tees Valley Metro

Members noted that, as part of Tees Valley Metro Phase 1, improvements were planned at Eaglescliffe and Thornaby Stations and were scheduled for implementation during 2010/11 and 2011/12.

It was explained that Ward Councillors had been briefed on the developments and progress associated with both Eaglescliffe and Thornaby Stations. As the design work developments further Ward Member briefings would be held and more detailed consultation would be undertaken with local residents, businesses and users. The public information document that had been prepared by Tees Valley Unlimited and gave general information on the purpose of this scheme was provided to Members.

It was noted that recent Government announcements with regard to publicly funded projects had placed an element of risk over the funding for the Tees Valley Metro and Tees Valley Bus Network Improvements schemes. Should the funding be reduced or withdrawn by Central Government then the prospect of these schemes proceeding was unlikely due to their high value.

Thornaby Station

As part of the Tees Valley Metro scheme a contribution (£290,000) would be made to provide a replacement footbridge at Thornaby Station. This would form part of a 'funding cocktail' with other contributions coming from Network Rail (£560,000) and the Council (£100,000).

The remainder of the funding would come from the Council's successful Access for All bid that was announced in March 2010. The successful bid for £250,000 was the final element of funding for the replacement bridge, which had an estimated cost of £1.2m, and had allowed Officers and Network Rail to start work on the project. It was anticipated that construction work would start towards the later stages of 2010/11.

Should the element of funding from Metro be withdrawn, this would leave a shortfall of £290,000. Opportunities to pursue this funding gap from other services would then be actively pursued and a further report to Cabinet brought on the options available.

Eaglescliffe Station

The improvements at Eaglescliffe would include refurbishing the existing station building to create a ticket office facility, improvements to the current ramped access to the pedestrian bridge to ensure it was fully DDA compliant, improvements to waiting facilities and improvements to the car parking facilities. As part of the scheme there would be provision of CCTV and a Customer Information System (CIS).

In terms of delivery, work at the station was anticipated to start towards the end of 2010 and be completed by March 2011.

In parallel to the work above which is funded by the Tees Valley Metro, officers have been working with Northern Rail and Grand Central Trains to develop a scheme to increase the size of the car park at the station. Funding for this was coming from Grand Central Trains and from the Council's approved Local Transport Plan for 2010-11. The design and development of this scheme was now advanced and this would also be completed by March 2011, therefore the risk to this funding was within the control of the Council.

RESOLVED that

1. the award of full funding for the Tees Valley Bus Network Improvements Scheme from the Department of Transport and the progress towards delivery of the scheme be noted
2. the progress of the Tees Valley Metro project be noted.
3. the award of funding for the Thornaby Station footbridge replacement be noted and authority be delegated to the Acting Head of Technical Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Transport to proceed with the design and delivery of the project.
4. it be noted that recent Central Government announcements and the Autumn 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review may place risk on the funding associated with the above projects.

**CAB
25/10**

A Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the Borough of Stockton on Tees

Members were provided with a copy of Stockton on Tees Health and Well being Strategy.

It was explained that the Strategy sets out the overarching aims and aspirations of the Health and Wellbeing Partnership. The Partnership brought together statutory, community and voluntary sectors in working towards improving the health and wellbeing of the local population. The Strategy had been developed from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, which articulated the commissioning needs for the locality.

The Partnership had supported the Strategy development and contributed to its evolution and recommended that the final document should be endorsed by both the Council and PCT.

Cabinet noted that there were a wide range of factors that influenced people's health and the Health and Wellbeing Partnership would monitor the key milestones and ensure that opportunities of working with all partners to meet the aim of improving the health and wellbeing of families, communities and adults were maximised

A particular focus for the Strategy will be the six priority areas covering:

- Mental Health
- Alcohol
- Obesity
- Smoking
- Health Inequalities
- Sexual Health

There would be close review of these issues via the Health and Wellbeing Partnership to ensure that progress in tackling these priorities was made.

RESOLVED that the Strategy be noted and the direction of travel outlined endorsed.

**CAB
26/10** **Appointments to Outside Bodies**

Cabinet considered nominations to serve on outside bodies

RESOLVED that the following appointments be approved:-

North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Trust - Cabinet Member for Adult Services & Health

Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Trust - Cabinet Member for Children & Young

Bus Lane and Adjudication Service Joint Committee - Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Transport with the Cabinet Member for Corporate Management and Finance acting as substitute.

**CAB
27/10** **Minutes of Various 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:-

Tees Valley Unlimited – Leadership Board - 9 September 2009

Tees Valley Unlimited – Tee Valley Living - 21 January 2010

Western Area Partnership Board - 25 January 2010

Stockton Renaissance - 2 February 2010

Central Area Partnership - 25 February 2010

Stockton Renaissance - 2 March 2010

Economic Regeneration and Transport Partnership - 10 March 2010

Local Safeguarding Children Board - 18 March 2010

Central Area Partnership Board - 25 March 2010

Western Area Partnership Board - 29 March 2010

Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board - 26 April 2010

Western Area Partnership Board - 26 April 2010

Housing and Neighborhood Partnership - 11 May 2010

**CAB
28/10** **Establishment of Regional Health Scrutiny Committee**

Members considered a report relating to the Establishment of a Regional Health Scrutiny Committee.

It was explained that the Health Select Committee had, in the past, taken advantage of the free support days provided by the Centre for Public Scrutiny to deliver Member training on Health Scrutiny. The most recent programme of support from the Centre consisted of 10 free days to Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs) in each Strategic Health Authority area. An application to use this support was made last year on behalf of the region and was successful.

As a result of the bid, an expert advisor was appointed to the 12 North East Councils. It was agreed that this support would be used to develop health scrutiny structures on a regional basis. On 28 February a joint meeting of health scrutiny chairs from across the region was held to discuss a draft protocol and possible working arrangements and a consensus was reached that there should be a standing regional health scrutiny committee to scrutinise regional health issues (for example the work of the Strategic Health Authority) and respond to statutory health consultations affecting all North East Councils.

An example of a statutory health consultation affecting the full region was the recent North East Ambulance Service consultation on their application to become a Foundation Trust (this took place during summer 2009). In that case a committee had to be formed at short notice in order to be able to respond to the consultation. Having a standing committee in place would ensure that if and when similar regional issues arose, they could be expedited in a quick and efficient way. Cabinet was informed that it was planned that the Committee would meet twice a year, and so this would not place an unreasonable burden on host authorities. The Committee may also choose to undertake discretionary scrutiny reviews on issues that affect the region as a whole.

A protocol had been drafted regarding a new standing regional scrutiny committee and this was provided for consideration. Members were asked to endorse the protocol to Council, and to endorse the proposal that the Chair of the Health Select Committee be the Council's representative. It was also recommended that if the Chair of the Health Select Committee was unavailable to attend a Regional Committee meeting then the Vice Chair of the Health Select Committee should attend as substitute. If neither the Chair or vice Chair was available then a substitute should be identified from the remaining members serving on the Council's Health Select Committee.

To enable the Protocol to be finalised and signed up to on behalf of the Council without the need for further reports, Cabinet was asked to recommend to Council that the Director of Law and Democracy be authorised to agree and sign up to the final version of the Protocol, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Corporate Management and Finance, and Adult Services and Health, and with the Chair of the Health Select Committee.

In order to ensure that all relevant Council Members and Officers were able to have appropriate input to the work of the Joint Committee, it was proposed that the following were discussed in advance with the Chair and/or Vice Chair/identified substitute member of the Health Select Committee; the relevant Cabinet Member (s); the Chief Executive and the Corporate Director of Children, Education and Social Care, or their nominees:

- proposed scrutiny topics or work;
- agenda items/business;
- urgent action in between Joint Committee meetings;
- review reports (draft and final);
- proposed media communications.

RECOMMENDED to Council that:

- 1. the Regional Health Scrutiny Committee Protocol be endorsed.**
- 2. the Chair of the Health Select Committee be appointed to serve on the proposed Joint Committee.**
- 3. the Vice-Chair of the Health Select Committee be approved as the initial substitute Member for the Chair of the Health Select Committee on the joint body.**
- 4. in the event of the Chair and Vice Chair being unable to attend a meeting of the Regional Health Scrutiny Committee, then a substitute be identified from the remaining Members of the Council's Health Select Committee.**
- 5. the Director of Law and Democracy be authorised to finalise and sign up to the Protocol on behalf of the Council, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Corporate Management and Finance, and Adult Services and Health, and with the Chair of the Health Select Committee.**
- 6. the proposed internal governance arrangements outlined above be noted.**

**CAB
29/10**

Leven Bridge - Repair Strategy

Members considered a report relating to issues that have forced the closure of the road going over Leven Bridge. The report also indicated the solution that had been identified to rectify the problem and the impact on resources as a result.

It was explained that the visible cracking in the road surface at Leven Bridge prompted a road closure in February 2010. The intervening period since then had resulted in a number of investigations being carried out to determine the cause and assist in identifying the solution.

These investigations had found that scour in the river bed and river bank had undermined the upstream corner of the north road bridge abutment and footbridge abutment resulting in a partial lack of support to both the road bridge and footbridge.

Remedial measures had been identified that involved filling the void with special grout bags and reinstating the river bed with anti scour material that would prevent the problem re-occurring. These were being implemented. An appropriate contractor was appointed on an emergency basis to assist with the development and delivery of the solution. This procurement was recorded as an Officer Decision, in order to expedite the necessary works and associated expenditure, given the timescales involved. In parallel officers had been working closely with the Environment Agency, utility companies and landowners to secure the necessary consents to ensure the works could be expedited at the earliest convenience.

It was anticipated that the works should be completed in July 2010 and the bridge re-opened to traffic in that period.

Officers were working closely with the contractor and other agencies to ensure that the cost implications in implementing the project were kept to a minimum, but it was recognised that the extent of works that were required could be up to £500,000. The Acting Head of Technical Services had been in dialogue with Government Office North East and the Department of Transport since early March to try and source financial support for the situation. Mixed messages had been received however, it was the intention to continue to lobby at the highest level to try and secure the support that was rightly needed to fund the project. The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport had also written to the Secretary of State for Transport to strengthen this message.

Cabinet noted that, where possible, and appropriate, officers would pursue other potential sources of funding where liability was proven to be a significant contributory factor to the damage to the bridge. This may be in the form of a cocktail of contributions based upon where the liability sat and the level of contribution to the overall problem. It was recognised however that the provisions within the new Flood and Water Management Act which received Royal assent in April 2010 in respect of defining responsibilities for maintenance of flood defence assets would not be able to be applied retrospectively.

The closure of the bridge and the arterial route it carries had had an impact not only on local residents and commuters but also local businesses in the immediate vicinity including those in Yarm, Ingleby Barwick and Thornaby. Throughout the period officers had given regular updates to Ward Councillors and to the wider public through dialogue with the media. Officers would continue to ensure that the progress and completion of the project was effectively communicated.

RESOLVED that

1. authority be delegated to the Acting Head of Technical Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport to oversee the programme of works.

2. authority be delegated to the Acting Head of Technical Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport to look for alternative funding sources.

RECOMMENDED that Council:

3. note that there may be an impact on resources as a result of the works required and approve the release of Council balances up to a maximum of £500,000.