

indicators relating to initial and core assessments.

The overall number of children who were subject to a child protection plan had reduced slightly from the peak of 282 in February to 263 in June.

The number of section 47 investigations remained high as did the numbers of child protection conferences and children becoming subject to a child protection plan.

The 'conversion rate' ie the percentage of referrals that subsequently led to a child protection plan for April to June was 3.3% compared with 5.8% between January and March.

Reference was made to staffing issues and it was noted that the situation in terms of vacant social work posts had improved slightly from 7.5 posts being vacant at the end of March to 2 posts at the end of June.

Members noted that as at the end of June there were 2 child protection and 5 looked after children cases unallocated. All children in need cases had been allocated.

It was explained that a workload pressures action plan had been drawn up covering a range of issues relating to staffing and allocations, and monthly meetings were taking place involving the Corporate Director, Head of Service and Service Managers in order to review and update this on a regular basis.

The pressures continued to have an impact on key areas of the Council's Budget. This was being considered as part of the overall Medium Term Financial Plan. Details of budget overspend was provided.

Cabinet noted that work had been undertaken by the Vulnerable Children's Safeguarding Network (VCSN) to collate information relating to workloads and staffing across the region. Details of the information collated was provided to members. This information confirmed that pressures were being experienced across the region.

It was explained that work was being undertaken by Stockton Local Safeguarding Children Board to develop a continuum of need and response. The purpose of this would be to clarify and agree thresholds across all agencies working in Stockton, which would ensure that there was a consistent and safe level of response to all referrals for social care intervention.

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.

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Members considered a report that provided an overview of the current economic climate, and outlined the effects that this was having on Stockton Borough, and the mitigations already in place and those being developed in response to this.

RESOLVED that Members note the content of the report and support the work undertaken to date.

CAB 60/10 Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults update 2009-10

Members considered a report that provided initial analysis of the activity of Stockton on Tees adult safeguarding during the past year (1st April 2009 to 31st March 2010) and comparisons with 2008/9 and 2007/8 to assist in plans for adult safeguarding in 2010/11. The Tees-wide Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Board report for 2009-10 would provide further analysis of Stockton's data in relation to the other local authority areas across the Tees Valley.

It was explained that during 2010/11 the Tees-wide Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Board, supported by the Tees-wide Adult Safeguarding Business Manager, would provide strategic direction for Local Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Committees and support for operational processes. Stockton's Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Committee would continue to contribute to the business of the Tees-wide Board and to the work of the Tees-wide Board sub-groups

The information contained in the update provided would be shared with the Tees-wide Board and statutory partners and would be used to contribute to the first joint Tees-wide Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults report covering 2009/10, which would provide strategic information from partner agencies and collate activity information across Tees.

Members welcomed the report and felt it would be helpful in raising the profile of issues surrounding safeguarding vulnerable adults.

RESOLVED that the content of the Stockton on Tees Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults update 2009 - 10 be noted.

CAB 61/10 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:-

Safer Stockton Partnership – 11 May 2010
Economic Regeneration and Transport Partnership – 14 July 2010
Housing and Neighbourhood Partnership – 21 July 2010
Central Area Partnership – 29 July 2010
Stockton Middlesbrough Initiative – 8 June 2010

CAB Q1 Improvement Report - Finance/Performance

Cabinet considered a report that outlined progress against the medium term financial plan and service performance for the first quarter of 2010/11. It highlighted achievements against objectives in the Council Plan, the Local Area Agreement, the National Indicator Set, consultation activity undertaken, summary of Freedom of Information requests, complaints, commendations and comments received and provided an update on progress with Efficiency Improvement and Transformation (EIT) and the new staff suggestion scheme.

Members were provided with a table detailing the current MTFP position of each service. Members noted the difficult financial position facing the Council. Officers continued to consider all areas of expenditure carefully.

It was noted that the General Fund Balances stood at £10.8m, which was 2.9m above the required 3% level.

It was explained that the projected Housing Revenue Account was in line with the budgeted surplus at £1.34million at 31st March 2011.

Details of capital budget for 2010/11 was detailed for members. The budget had been amended to reflect recent Government funding announcements in respect of reductions in capital grants. Details of those reductions were provided together with other funding announcements that may have an impact on the Council.

It was explained the Government had indicated that the Playbuilder capital grants were currently under review and the Council had been asked to provide information on the programme. The Council was anticipating £440,000 in this financial year which was to be utilised to deliver the schemes outlined at Appendix A to the report considered and had generated £288,000 in match funding. The Council had responded to the request outlining its plans, the success of the scheme, and the impact on the community should funding levels change.

Members were reminded of the creation of the Northshore Academy, bringing together the former Norton and Blakeston schools. Recent announcements around BSF, and more recently Academy funding, indicated that the Council would not find out information on timescales on future funding until after the Comprehensive Spending Review. The preferred site for the Academy was the Tilery site, however, it was operating on the site of the former Blakeston school.

The Norton site was therefore vacant and if this was not demolished it was likely to attract anti-social behaviour problems and would result in significant security costs. The previous BSF programme incorporated costs of demolition as well as an estimate of capital receipts relating to the sale of the footprint of the site.

Members were also reminded that the site of the former King Edwin school was also vacant and officers had been reviewing options for this site. The site was a particularly difficult site for development due to a range of issues, not least access, and therefore there would be little value in attempting to dispose of this site. There was however, opportunity to demolish the school and convert the land into public open space. This would allow opportunities to swap for other sites within the area.

The estimated costs of the demolition was £600,000, though detailed asbestos surveys had not yet been undertaken, and although valuation of sites was difficult in the current climate, even a pessimistic valuation of the site exceeded this amount. There would, however, be issues of cashflow when demolition costs were incurred and it would be beneficial to delay marketing of the site until market conditions improved.

It was therefore recommended that Members approve the demolition of the two sites and the sale of the footprint of Norton School.

Members considered future funding and it was explained that there continued to be significant uncertainty around future funding and detailed financial modelling for future years was extremely difficult. If, however, reductions in funding were in the region of 25% as has been indicated, the Council would need to identify savings in the region of £12m per year, over and above those currently planned as part of our medium term financial plan, by 2014/15. This information would become clearer following the Comprehensive Spending Review in October and the subsequent Provisional Finance Settlement. Members noted that the Council had a managed and planned approach to delivering efficiency savings through its EIT programme and Partnering consideration, and this would continue. There may be, however, a need to update and amend the programme as the future funding position became clearer. Members would be informed through further reports and Members Briefing Sessions.

Members were provided with and considered the Treasury Management Annual Report which would be presented to Council for approval.

Members moved on and considered Council's performance against Council Plan objectives, the Local Area Agreement, the National Indicator set, details of resident feedback on consultation activity undertaken, a summary of Freedom of Information requests received and analysis of complaints and commendations. A series of appendices had been prepared to support the report and provided members with a full picture of performance.

Of the National Indicator measures where information was available, 78% (67 indicators) across all themes had achieved targets or were within the agreed tolerance set, this compared to 83% at quarter 1 last year.

The number of complaints was lower, and compliments and commendations higher, than the same period last year.

Performance against the achievement of the Council Plan objectives would be available at Quarter 2 in line with normal annual reporting policies. Progress by Council Plan Theme was detailed to Members.

RECOMMENDED to Council that:-

- 1. the updated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Capital Programme be approved.**
- 2. the demolition of the former Norton and King Edwin schools be approved, initially funding from revenue balances (£600,000), which will be**

replenished from the proceeds of the land sales.

RESOLVED that:-

3. levels of performance and subsequent actions be noted.

**CAB
63/10 New Executive Arrangements**

Members considered a report that outlined the outcome of further consultation relating to New Executive Arrangements. The report also detailed possible proposals for change, which were required to be submitted to the Secretary of State.

Members were reminded that at the meeting on the 26 November, 2009 Cabinet considered a report which outlined the feedback from the initial consultation which had been undertaken on new executive arrangements.

This followed an earlier report to Cabinet on 6 August, 2009 and a decision by Council on 9 September, 2009 that:-

- Information regarding the two executive models would be provided:-
 - at information points in key council buildings, such as reception areas and libraries;
 - on the Council's website;
 - through a programme of consultation; and
 - in Keeping you in Touch
- Interested persons would be asked to indicate which of the executive models they would prefer to see included in a referendum.
- Responses should be able to be provided in a variety of ways e.g. in writing, by email.
- An appropriate press release would be issued.
- The consultation/response period would be 4 weeks.

This initial consultation resulted in only 425 replies and of these, opinion was fairly evenly split with regard to which of the following two models was preferred:-

- Council Leader and Cabinet
- Directly Elected Mayor and Cabinet

Taking this into account and although Council had previously (9 September 2009) resolved that a referendum should be held on a preferred or chosen model identified via the consultation, Cabinet Members expressed concern at the apparent lack of public interest shown both in Stockton Borough and other parts of the country, which it was felt cast doubt as to whether the cost of holding a full scale referendum (the equivalent of full local elections at an approximate cost of £200k) was justified in the current economic climate.

On the 26 November 2009 Cabinet therefore recommended to Council and Council agreed (on 9 December, 2009) that:-

(i) the decision to hold a referendum regarding the chosen executive model and related proposals for change be rescinded.

(ii) further consultation takes place as follows:-

Information regarding the two executive models will be provided to all local government electors, who will be asked to indicate which of the executive models they would prefer to see introduced by the Council.

(iii) a report be submitted to Cabinet regarding the outcome of this further consultation, with a view to one of the executive models and the related proposals for change being recommended to Council for approval.

(iv) the Chief Executive, in consultation with Cabinet Members and Group Leaders, be authorised to finalise:-

- the details of and arrangements relating to the further consultation outlined at recommendation 2, including the timescale for replies.
- A communications programme regarding the outcome of Council's consideration of these recommendations; and subject to that the reporting of the results of the further consultation to Cabinet and Council.

(v) the costs of further consultation process be met from corporate balances.

In accordance with Council's decision, information regarding the two executive models was provided to all Local Government electors, who were asked to signify their preferred model by completing and returning a consultation reply slip in a prepaid envelope. Details of that information were provided.

In addition, details about the consultation and the supporting information were placed on the Council's website; an article appeared in Stockton News and a press release was issued.

The further consultation ran from 7 July to 29 July 2010 and details of the replies were provided:-

26069 consultation reply slips had been returned. This represented a turnout of 18.47% (electorate 141,164). The breakdown of responses was as follows:-

13445 in favour of a Council Leader and Cabinet

12513 in favour of a Directly Elected Mayor and Cabinet

111 void for uncertainty

It was explained that taking the further consultation outcome into account, it was now for the Council to determine which of the two executive models should be adopted. The next steps after this decision were set out in a timetable/project plan provided.

The next steps must culminate in the Council implementing/operating one of the two new executive models by 8 May 2011.

. Proposals for change were required to be submitted to the Secretary of State, providing appropriate details of the new executive model, which was to be implemented/operated.

Members noted that when approved the agreed proposals would have to be submitted to the Secretary of State.

After the proposals had been submitted to the Secretary of State, a notice had to be published as soon as possible. The notice would state that the Council had drawn up the proposals, describe briefly what they were and state that they were available for inspection at the Municipal Buildings.

Subject to this, a further resolution would then have to be passed at a Special Council meeting agreeing to implement the new proposals for change.

A second notice must then be published confirming this decision had been made and indicating when the new arrangements would come into force.

Cabinet considered the report and results of the consultation. Members commented that the turnout had been relatively good and noted that a majority of responses had indicated a preference for a Council Leader and Cabinet model.

RECOMMENDED to Council that:-

- 1. the Council Leader and Cabinet new executive model be approved.**
- 2. the proposals for change based on the Council Leader and Cabinet executive model, as detailed at Appendix 5 of the report, be approved for submission to the Secretary of State.**
- 3. delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Corporate Management and Finance to finalise the agreed proposals for change for submission to the Secretary of State.**

**CAB
64/10**

Exclusion of Public

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that consideration of it is likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

**CAB
65/10**

Housing Regeneration Schemes

Members considered a report that provided an update on the current position with the Council's major housing regeneration schemes at Mandale, Hardwick, Parkfield and Swainby Road. The report also included an update for Northshore.

RESOLVED that:-

1. the content of the report be noted
2. the progression of the Parkfield / Mill Lane and Swainby Road regeneration scheme, in line with the detail of the report be endorsed.
3. a future report to update on progress be received once future public funding has been confirmed.