

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting16th December 2010

1. Title of Item/Report

Task & Finish EIT Review-Democratic Services

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report outlining the findings of the Officer Task & Finish EIT Review of Democratic Services originally programmed to be reviewed in April 2011 but brought forward due to the increasing financial pressure and desire to effect the proposed changes before the 2011 Elections The review covered all areas within Democratic Services and realisation of any benefits arising would be expedited with recommendations implemented in year. Scrutiny of this review was undertaken by the Executive Scrutiny Committee, who endorsed the recommendations presented.

The service was made up of four service areas as follows:

- Democratic and Members Services Team (9.5 FTE) (1 post on secondment)
- Scrutiny Team (5 FTE including 1 vacant post)
- Electoral, Civic and Community Engagement Team (7 FTE)
- Efficiency Improvement Transformation (1 FTE)

There were 20.5 FTE equivalents across the Division which operated from the Municipal Buildings and utilised a core budget of £741,000 and Corporate Budgets totalling £1,955,000.

The review followed the corporate approach taken which required that all reviews were conducted with equal rigour and as part of an overall corporate strategy. A review team was established at the outset to progress work and ensure the wider corporate policy implications and customer requirements were considered. The Director of Law & Democracy, the Corporate Management Team and the EIT Sub-Board had provided a Strategic overview and challenged the status quo. Elected Members supported the review through their roles as customers, policy makers and community representatives. A desk top exercise had also been completed to draw together appropriate consultation, benchmarking / performance data, financial appraisals and feedback from staff which

had been evaluated and was presented for consideration. Details were also provided of the statutory elements of the service and the implications should the service not continue to be provided in its current form.

It was noted that many of the proposed recommendations were subject to further consultation with elected members, the views of which would be channelled through the Members Advisory Panel. The projected saving that could be achieved should each of the above recommendations be implemented would be approximately £60k, including the pass-porting of Area Grant Based Allocation of £15,393, the continuation of which into future years was subject to confirmation.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The Area Based Allocation grants amounting to £15,393 be retained as part of the Council's overall required savings.
2. Subject to CMT and MAP approving the introduction of a summer recess period for Council/Committee meetings, the Head of Democratic Services be authorised to consider the introduction of a system of annualised hours for Democratic Services staff and realise any financial savings that accrue from this.
3. Subject to consultation with Members, the Council's approach to the hosting of its AGM be revised, as outlined, with effect from 2011 and MAP be invited to consider options to be presented regarding the future role of ordinary Council meetings..
4. Subject to full consultation with elected Members:-
 - the Head of Democratic Services and the Head of ICT seek to introduce a standardised level of future IT support for Members;
 - following the successful rationalisation of our printer estate within the authority and the introduction of secure 'follow me' printing from multi-function devices, local printers in Members homes be no longer supported;
 - in line with Workwise principles, the amount of office accommodation provided within the Council offices be rationalised to reduce the amount of office space required in favour of more shared 'touchdown' facilities with concentrated workspace areas;
 - advancements in IT technology be reviewed in the near future to see whether devices such as I-Pads, tablets etc can be introduced by the Authority offering longer term efficiencies leading to a reduction in the Council's Printing budget with less paper work sent to Members and the facility for Members to access all documents via a tablet, upon which

notes can be made on the documents electronically.

5. Attendance at the list of approved conferences be reviewed by the Members Advisory Panel.

6. Democratic Services, in consultation with each elected Member, be authorised to identify ward surgery venues that can be provided at no cost to the Authority, utilising more widely library and school buildings where appropriate.

7. The business case for transferring servicing of LSP meetings to Democratic Services be explored by the Head of Democratic Services.

8. Democratic Services deliver the further service improvements identified through independent assessment and inspection at no extra cost to the Authority within existing budgets.

9. Support arrangements for the Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee be reviewed (in discussion with other Tees Valley Authorities) with a view to removing the £5000 scrutiny support to Middlesbrough Council and providing scrutiny support on a rotational basis from within existing scrutiny budgets at Stockton.

10. The staffing arrangements regarding vacant posts be made permanent and any resulting savings be made permanent within the structure and budgets for Democratic Services.

11. Future work be carried out to examine the civic function and how the current staffing arrangements and roles can become multi functional to increase efficiencies whilst maintaining and improving the current service.

12. A new lease car for the Mayor be procured at an annual saving of £2,200.

13. The Head of Democratic Services continue to work with procurement to maximise the opportunities for savings in respect of electoral printing.

3. Reasons for the Decision

As part of the Council's EIT Programme, and as part of the agreed Scrutiny Work Programme for 2010/11, this officer led review has been undertaken as a value for money exercise with a view to realising any financial savings that may contribute towards the Council's overall

financial objectives and service improvement programme.

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

Midnight on Friday 24 December 2010

Proper Officer
20 December 2010