

## CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO CABINET**

**16 DECEMBER 2010**

**REPORT OF ENVIRONMENT  
SELECT COMMITTEE**

### **CABINET DECISION**

**Environment – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Beaumont  
Regeneration and Transport – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Cook**

#### **BUILT AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

1. Summary

The Environment Select Committee has examined four areas of the Built and Natural Environment services and applied the EIT processes to determine where changes should take place within the Blue Badge Scheme, School Crossing Patrol Service, Urban Design Team, and Car Parking. The recommendations are given to help rationalise services and introduce greater equity of service provision.

2. Recommendations

The Committee recommends:

#### **Blue Badge Scheme**

R1 the introduction of a simplified model for applying for a Blue Badge similar to that operated by other local authorities.

R2 that an additional charge (initially £3) for the production of a digital photograph to be used on a Blue Badge be added to the administration charge levied.

#### **School Crossing Patrols**

R3 that the seven School Crossing Patrol sites identified where a puffin or pelican crossing are available or where the sites no longer meet the criteria are closed.

R4 that six further sites identified be surveyed to assess their position against criteria and are closed if appropriate.

R5 that a policy be developed to ensure S106 agreements can secure the establishment of a puffin or pelican crossing rather than introduce a School Crossing Patrol where necessary.

R6 that annual surveys be conducted at all sites to determine if they meet national criteria.

R7 that annual surveys determine the number of unaccompanied children using School Crossing Patrol sites.

## **Urban Design**

- R8 that a review is undertaken of the trading account arrangements with the intention of bringing the service into a revenue funding position.
- R9 that a review is undertaken of corporate and management overheads and requirement for operational surplus to reduce fee rates to make Urban Design even more competitive in its service delivery and compliance with Local Authority regulations for any services provided to Tees Valley Authorities.
- R10 that a management review of staff roles to be undertaken where there are clear synergies with those of the Countryside Team, with a view to achieving further efficiency savings.

## **Car Parking**

- R11 that further work is undertaken in order to consider the structure of car parking charges in Stockton Town Centre which will also include Blue Badge users.
- R12 the introduction of long stay car parking charges at Yarm Rail Halt.
- R13 the principle of charging for car parking in Yarm and that it is introduced as part of a wider review of car parking charges across the Borough.
- R14 that income generated by car parking charging in Yarm contribute towards the provision, maintenance and security of car parking facilities and other public transport measures.

### **3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)**

The Council incurs a large cost for providing the Blue Badge Scheme. The streamlining of the service and providing the required photographs will assist to reduce the overall cost.

Some school crossing patrols are provided where alternative road crossing measures exist. Where appropriate this duplication is to be addressed.

The Urban Design Team has the opportunity to compete for work external to the Council but require alternative financial arrangements to be in place to be more competitive.

Car parking charges will bring Yarm in-line with other parts of Stockton Borough and will assist the development of permanent long-stay parking in Yarm. Amended car parking charges in Stockton Town Centre may help to assist the regeneration of the town centre.

### **4. Members Interests**

Members (including co-opted members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (paragraph 8) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (paragraph 10 of the code of conduct).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held -

- in a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;
- in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

and must not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (paragraph 12 of the Code).

**Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc; whether or not they are a Member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.**

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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee recommends:

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**School Crossing Patrols**

- R3 that the seven School Crossing Patrol sites identified where a puffin or pelican crossing are available or where the sites no longer meet the criteria are closed.
- R4 that six further sites identified be surveyed to assess their position against criteria and are closed if appropriate.
- R5 that a policy be developed to ensure S106 agreements can secure the establishment of a puffin or pelican crossing rather than introduce a School Crossing Patrol where necessary.
- R6 that annual surveys be conducted at all sites to determine if they meet national criteria.
- R7 that annual surveys determine the number of unaccompanied children using School Crossing Patrol sites.

## **Urban Design**

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- R9 that a review is undertaken of corporate and management overheads and requirement for operational surplus to reduce fee rates to make Urban Design even more competitive in its service delivery and compliance with Local Authority regulations for any services provided to Tees Valley Authorities.
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## **DETAIL**

### **Blue Badge Scheme**

1. The Disabled Persons' Parking Badge Scheme provides a national arrangement of on-street parking concessions for severely disabled people who are unable, or find it difficult, to use public transport. The Regulations governing the Scheme give local authorities the discretion to charge an application fee, but this cannot exceed £2. In Stockton Council the staffing, stationary, and the purchase of badges has been calculated to cost £28 per badge. Some additional income can be realised by the Council providing the photo's required for the Blue Badges.
2. Sunderland City Council provided information to the Committee having used 'Lean Processing' to improve the speed of providing Blue Badge assessments which in turn is improving customer satisfaction. The overall savings could not yet be quantified although based on the estimated cost of processing the fee Sunderland were expecting savings of at least £85,800. A proportion of the saving is due to the loss of an Occupational Therapist whereas Stockton Council, along with 10 other north-east LAs, utilise GP assessments and therefore will not see such savings.

### **School Crossing Patrols**

3. Stockton Borough Council has responsibility for the School Crossing Patrol service which consists of; 1 Road Safety Officer, 3 Senior Patrollers, 2 Mobile Patrollers and 54 Static Patrollers at annual cost of £350,000.
4. The service is operated in accordance with the adopted National Guidelines for the operation of School Crossing Patrols. The National Guidelines provide a clear procedure for determining whether a School Crossing Patrol site is justified.

5. Currently 35 sites meet the numerical criteria and have no alternative crossing facility. The National Guidance also states that School Crossing Patrols should not operate on a light controlled crossing unless there are exceptional circumstances. 17 sites meet the numerical criteria but operate on light controlled or zebra crossings and 6 sites no longer meet the criteria but currently are served by a School Crossing Patrol.
6. Seven School Crossing Patrol sites identified where a puffin or pelican crossing are available or where the sites no longer meet the criteria being recommended for closure are:

<b>Location</b>	<b>Reason for closure</b>	<b>Primary schools served</b>
Oxbridge Lane/Marlborough Road (Oxbridge)	Operating on pelican crossing	Oxbridge Lane
Yarm Road/St Peters Road (Oxbridge)	Operating on pelican crossing	Bowesfield
The Green/Duckpond (Norton)	Operating on pelican crossing	Crooksbar and St Joseph RC (Norton)
Yarm Road/Butts Lane (Yarm)	Operating on pelican crossing	Eaglescliffe
Thornaby Road/Windsor Road (Thornaby)	Operating on pelican crossing	Thornaby Village
Thorntree Road/Humber Road (Thornaby)	Operating on pelican crossing	Thornaby Village and Mandale Mill
Norton Ave/Recreation Ground Entrance (Norton Grange)	Latest survey fails to meet criteria	Fredrick Natrass and St Joseph (Norton)

7. All sites are resurveyed every 3 years. Where a new development is to take place it was suggested that S106 agreements could be used to secure a puffin or pelican crossing is established rather than introduce a School Crossing Patrol. The Committee was eager for a policy to be developed that would ensure that this occurred in the future.

## **Urban Design**

8. The Urban Design team was formed in 2006 as part of a re-organisation bringing together engineering and landscape architects professionals. The team provide a co-ordinated input into the planning service on aspects ranging from transport to renewable energy.
9. Urban Design is funded partially from revenue budgets with other fees being generated via a Trading Account. The main areas of fee generation supporting the Trading Account come from Planning Services, Regeneration, plus Countryside & Green Space within Direct Services.
10. Urban Design's corporate work includes servicing council wide activities and responding to Elected Member/Planning Committee. Although such activities are not fee earning they must be absorbed within the overheads which form part of the hourly rate for fees. Management Structure and Corporate overheads also have to be included in the total fee recovery which further increases the hourly rate. The trading activity requires that Urban Design not only covers its costs including overheads but also returns an operational surplus to the Council.
11. The Committee believe that reduced fees following a review of the trading account arrangements with a view to bringing the service into a revenue funding position could improve the competitiveness and provide a compliance service to Tees Valley Unlimited and other Local Authorities. Currently both TVU and other Tees Valley Authorities use a mix of temporary staff, private practices or other external agencies to assist in the delivery of their design services.

## **Car Parking**

12. The car parking service is a non-statutory service. Management of public parking facilities assists with traffic management and environmental improvements. The on-street facilities (typically those located by the kerbside) and off-street facilities (within car parks) are distributed throughout the Borough. The facilities are paid for completely by the motorist with cross subsidy of non-charging car parking spaces by charging ones currently entirely located in Stockton Town Centre. Maximum lengths of stay restrictions are generally structured to promote short-term parking and high turnover of spaces in town centres, but a degree of long-term commuter parking is permitted in the outer areas.
13. In 2009 Stockton Council carried out a consultation exercise asking for opinions on a range of options for the potential of improving parking in Yarm Town Centre. The Committee taking into consideration the requirements of the EIT process balanced with the Cabinet decisions following the consultation was keen to see parity across Stockton Borough wherever possible. With car parking charges payable in Stockton Town Centre it was considered inequitable not to charge in other town centres in the Borough.
14. The Committee was keen to ensure that any introduction of charges could be 'ring-fenced' thereby guaranteeing the positive use of raised income. Members wanted to see monies used to improve car parking services and public transport investment so as not to negatively impact on Yarm High Street.

## **FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

### **Financial**

#### **Blue Badge Scheme**

15. Savings are in the order of £59K for not requiring a medical certificate but this is to be attributed to the PCT (However with the demise of the PCT this may ultimately fall to SBC).
16. The blue badge scheme is to be delivered by the Contact Centre when that is fully operational in 2011. The issue of the blue badge is to be charged at £2 with an additional £3 for the photograph to be taken digitally at the centre, making the total charge £5 and raising revenue income to around £17,500. Additional income is to be in the order of £10,500.

#### **School Crossing Patrol Service**

17. Seven sites closed where a puffin or pelican crossings are available or where the sites no longer meet the criteria. Savings £23,000.
18. Six further sites to be surveyed to assess their position against criteria. Potential maximum savings if all six fail to meet the criteria and are closed, £30,000.

### **Urban Design**

19. Review the trading account arrangements with a view to bringing the service into a revenue funding position. Potential savings are to be identified through the ability to deliver more schemes from capital allocation of funding.
20. A management review of staff roles will be undertaken where there are clear synergies with those of the Countryside Team, with a view to achieving further efficiency savings.

## **Car Parking**

21. Introduce car parking charges in Yarm High Street and long stay parking charges at Yarm Rail Halt. Additional income from this would be in the order of £60,000.

## **Legal**

22. None

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

23. This scrutiny report is categorised as low to medium risk.

## **COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS**

24. The review impacts on a number of themes including Economic regeneration and Transport – Improve the quality of place within the Borough, Safer Communities – Ensure our residents are safe, and Health and Well-being – Improved quality of life.

## **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

24. The EIA shows a positive effect for individuals with a disability with streamlining of the Blue Badge application process.

## **CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS**

25. None

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### Background Papers

None

### Ward(s) and Ward Councillors

Yarm wards and Ward Councillors regarding the introduction of car parking charges in Yarm. Those wards and Ward Councillors where School Crossing Patrols could be redeployed.

### Property

None