

Cabinet

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday, 1st December, 2011.

Present: Cllr Robert Cook (Chairman), Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr David Coleman, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr David Harrington, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr David Rose and Cllr Michael Smith

Officers: N. Schneider (CE); J. Danks, G. Cummings, L. King, B. Brown, E. Chesworth, J. Spittle (R); J. Humphreys, S. McLurg (CESC); P. Dobson, R. McGuckin, R. Poundford, C. Straughan, J. McCann (DNS); D. Bond, M. Waggott, J. Trainer, P. Mennear, M. Henderson (LD)

Also in attendance: Cllr Mark Chatburn, Cllr Nigel Cook, Cllr Phil Dennis, Cllr Ken Lupton and Cllr Maurice Perry

Apologies: Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy

CAB 82/11 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Beall declared a personal non prejudicial interest in the item entitled Managing a school emergency or critical incident as he was a governor of Roseworth School.

Councillor Harrington declared a personal non prejudicial interest in the item entitled Medium Term Financial Plan Update and Strategy as he was a member of a Trade Union referred to in the report.

Councillors Coleman and Rose each declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in respect of the item entitled Building Assets-Update as a result of their membership of Catalyst. Councillor Nelson also declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as a result of being a school governing body member of Frederick Nattrass Primary School.

CAB 83/11 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2011 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the chairman.

CAB 84/11 **EIT Review of Regeneration and Economic Development - Report of Regeneration and Transport Select Committee**

Cabinet considered a report relating to the findings of the EIT Review of Regeneration and Economic Development undertaken by the Regeneration and Transport Select Committee between June and November 2011.

It was explained that the review examined a number of service areas within the Regeneration and Economic Development including employability, enterprise, business engagement (including tourism), support for Tees Valley Unlimited, major projects, town centre development, and the strategic role of Tees Achieve. The overall aim of the review had been to identify options for future strategy, policy & service provision that would deliver efficiency savings and sustain / improve high quality outcomes for the Borough's residents, businesses and visitors.

The Committee concluded that the Service had an important role to play in improving employability and supporting the growth of business sectors that will

underpin economic recovery.

In order to achieve the savings that would be required in order for the Service to contribute to the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan the Committee had made a number of recommendations. A number of those would be achieved through reductions in project budgets that reflected the reduced workload in some areas, especially physical regeneration schemes. However, due to the nature of the Service's core budget and its focus on staffing costs, the Committee regretted that savings through a reduction in the number of posts within the Service was unavoidable.

Alongside the necessary savings the Committee had made a number of recommendations in order to ensure that the Service would be able to focus on its core role. Several operational and facility management functions would be more appropriately performed by the relevant dedicated teams elsewhere in the Council's structure, enterprise and employability work would continue to be taken forward, and the increased specialisation within business engagement will enable an increased focus on priority areas.

Critical to the development of its strategic leadership role would be the ability of the Service to undertake higher level analysis of the economic needs of the Borough. In order to do this, the Service would need to increase its capabilities in relation to research and data analysis, namely through the development of an economic intelligence function. This would be a step change in the Council's ability to identify priorities for its strategy for economic development.

The Service would continue to be important in working in partnership with external organisations including TVU in order to successfully implement many of the service improvements that had been identified. The review had made a number of recommendations that will lead to a more effective Regeneration and Economic Development Service in the future.

It was noted that the services under review had a net budget of £1,273m. Taken together the overall financial impact of the recommendations would be to achieve efficiency savings of approximately £210,000 from 2012-13.

Members were informed that subject to Cabinet's consideration, an action plan would be submitted to the Select Committee setting out how approved recommendations would be implemented, detailing the officers responsible for action and timescales.

RESOLVED that

1. that the future role of the Regeneration and Economic Development Service should primarily be that of strategic leadership in supporting the economic growth of the Borough, and defining the Borough's growth needs based on a sound understanding of its existing and future position;
2. that the Regeneration and Economic Development Major Projects Team be reduced to reflect the reduced number of known and potential project opportunities;
3. that specific activities within the current town centres management function,

such as the operational elements of festivals, events and markets, be performed by other service areas within the Council, and that the Regeneration Service continues to provide input into the planning and identification of events to ensure that they bring economic benefits;

4. that a higher level, critical thinking and strategic economic intelligence function should be created within the Regeneration and Economic Development Service, building upon and enhancing the data analysis work undertaken at corporate and directorate level, to create an influential evidence base to steer delivery priorities;

5. that the Tourist Information Centre staff should be retained within Regeneration and Economic Development whilst consideration is given to maintaining a Stockton High Street presence and including tourist information functions at the Customer Contact Centre in Thornaby and other appropriate premises, and that the tourism economic and strategic agenda be incorporated into business engagement, with only strategic input into events planning.

6. a) that a detailed evaluation be undertaken of the operational functions of the Stockton Business Centre;

b) that this evaluation is used to develop options for the future management of the Centre, in conjunction with the Council's review of facilities management;

c) and that prior to a decision on the future management arrangements, the existing Centre management functions become part of the Service's business engagement activities in the short term, and available efficiency savings be implemented;

7. that the Council's Land and Property Services take on the property management functions associated with the Shambles building;

8. that Stockton's input of resources into the Stockton Middlesbrough initiative be reduced in line with the deliverability of schemes;

9. that the Regeneration and Economic Development Service should encourage and raise awareness of enterprise, mainstream the work with children and young people and support for schools and colleges by delivering it as part of the core Service, and provide an element of enterprise coaching targeted on specific groups, such as lone parents;

10. that the Regeneration Service should provide strategic leadership (in partnership with Tees Valley Unlimited) on employment and skills, and better utilise the resources and knowledge within Tees Achieve in understanding and meeting the employment and skills needs of the local economy;

11. that the Regeneration Service should increase its capacity to enable closer working with TVU to ensure the delivery of the TVU Business Plan and Statement of Ambition, and to ensure the success of the Local Enterprise Partnership;

12. the business engagement service increases its capacity to focus support on new and existing businesses based on sectoral growth opportunities, and develop an effective business loans scheme to replace the existing business grants scheme.

Efficiency, Improvement and Transformation Review of Care for Your Area

Cabinet considered a report that presented the findings of the Environment Select Committee following the EIT review of Care for Your Area (CFYA).

Members noted that the review had examined a variety of services that were delivered by CFYA across the borough to ensure the environment was clean, safe and well maintained. Those included refuse collection and kerbside recycling, vehicle maintenance, grounds maintenance/horticulture/urban parks, and street cleansing. Cabinet was informed that the recommendations identified a number of efficiencies and savings that could be achieved through operational structures which would have a minimum impact on front-line delivery, and thereby ensure that both service performance and customer satisfaction levels remained high. The recommendations also requested officers undertake further work with depot relocation and workshops that could lead to future savings.

Cabinet noted that subject to consideration by Cabinet, an action plan would be submitted to the Select Committee setting out how approved recommendations would be implemented, detailing officers responsible for action and timescales.

RESOLVED that

1. the following efficiencies (minimising the impact on front line service delivery) be implemented:

- Management/Supervision - undertake a review of management and supervision structures where recent staffing changes have taken place, e.g. Countryside Parks, Markets
- Round Reconfiguration - reconfigure refuse and recycling rounds where known efficiencies can be made without disruption to collection day
- Parks Improvement Fund - reduce budgets by £100,000
- Reduce supplies and services budgets (across all services) by £100,000
- Street Cleansing / Grounds Maintenance - As part of ongoing discussions with TU partners, service condition changes to be agreed and implemented. Expressions of interest to be formally sought from those employees who may be unable to adapt to changes for a potential ER/VR scheme
- Income from recyclable material - Increase income targets from the sale of recycling materials by £230,000.

2. the feasibility of acquiring land or existing Council-owned land suitable to house the entire service at one depot location be explored.

3. the feasibility of partnership working and alternative delivery models be explored to deliver 24/7 workshop support service to a range of internal and external customers, including other local authorities.

4. Officers examine the details of the newly announced Weekly Collections Support Scheme to identify whether Stockton would be eligible for any funding under the scheme.

Managing a School Emergency or Critical Incident

Members considered a report relating to draft guidance prepared for schools on responding and managing low level emergencies and/or critical incidents.

Cabinet recognised that parents and carers trusted schools and providers to keep their children and young people safe. Thanks to the efforts of staff and governors, schools normally remained a safe haven for children but there were occasions when an emergency or a critical incident could disrupt the smooth running of a school. Schools could become involved in an emergency or critical incident at any time and at such times a Headteacher was often required to operate in a complex circumstance, of which s(he) may have had no previous experience. This may, or may not, involve the closure of a school.

Members were provided with a copy of draft guidance which would provide schools with the information they needed to respond to school emergencies and critical incidents. It included a section dedicated to school closures due to adverse weather conditions. The guidance clearly stated that, with regard to school closures, for any reason, the decision as to whether to close must be for headteachers to make. It was proposed that this document be circulated to all headteachers and principals of Stockton schools and academies and to the chairs of governing bodies.

Cabinet discussed issues surrounding school closures, due to adverse weather conditions, and noted that plans were in place to communicate closures and transport issues widely. Members queried the typical reasons for closure, that had been cited by schools in the past and asked for assurances that schools had emergency plans in place.

Members noted that a report would come back to Cabinet relating to this matter and it would pick up the issues raised by members.

RESOLVED that

1. the draft guidance and the role of the local authority set out within it be noted.
2. the guidance be circulated to schools and academies.

**CAB
87/11** **Children's Workload Pressures**

Cabinet considered a further report relating to workload pressures within Children's Social Care. Members were updated on those pressures and were provided with information up to the end of September 2011.

It was explained that the number of referrals had dropped from 211 in July to 154 in August and stood at 172 in September. Initial assessments and core assessments undertaken in September had been 155 and 78 respectively.

The overall number of children who were subject to a child protection plan had continued to rise and stood at 287.

The overall number of looked after children had risen to 314 in August.

It was noted that the overall staffing situation remained positive, however, a high proportion of staff remained relatively inexperienced. Clearly all cases had to be

appropriately allocated to a named social worker but this needed to be balanced with the need to ensure workers had manageable caseloads which were commensurate with their ability and level of experience.

There were no allocated child protection cases but there were 2 unallocated looked after children cases and 10 unallocated children in need cases. Unallocated cases were held by the appropriate team manager.

As a result of the increasing pressures and need to ensure cases were safely allocated and progressed in a timely manner, 6 additional supernumerary agency staff had been employed within the referral and assessment and specialist social work teams as of the end of September, on a strictly time limited basis. These posts were subject to ongoing monitoring and review by Corporate Director and Head of Service.

Cabinet noted the budgetary pressures currently facing the service and particularly the projected overspends on the independent fostering agency budget, children's homes agency placement budget and staffing budgets. Such issues continued to be considered through the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Members noted that the 'Put yourself in the Picture' marketing campaign had identified 3 prospective foster carers and one prospective adopter who were currently undergoing assessment. A fuller report on this would be brought back to Cabinet in due course.

Cabinet noted that, with regard to the two proposed new children's homes, it was anticipated that the Piper Knowle home would open in December 2011 and the Redcar Road home in February 2012.

It was explained that the Efficiency Improvement and Transformation review of Children's social care was now underway and the scoping document had been agreed by the Arts, Leisure and Culture Select Committee. Given the tight timescales and wide range of services covered by the review, a number of key questions had been identified to ensure the review focused on the most important issues affecting the service in the context of the ongoing work pressures. Details of those questions were provided to Cabinet.

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 on a quarterly basis be received, in order to continue to monitor the impact of these workload pressures.
3. the proposed approach to the EIT review of children's social care be endorsed.

**CAB
88/11**

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 nomination to school Governing Body as detailed within the report.

RESOLVED that appointment be made to the vacant Governorship subject to successful List 99 check and Personal Disclosure, as follows:-

Our Lady of Most Holy Rosary RC Primary School – Simon Pearson.

**CAB
89/11** **Economic Climate 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.

Members noted some of the positive and negative developments since the last report. Details of the support on offer to people and businesses was also provided.

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

**CAB
90/11** **Minutes of Outside 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:-

Central Area Partnership Board – 29 September 2011
Northern Area Partnership Board – 3 October 2011
Central Area Partnership Board – 27 October 2011

**CAB
91/11** **Medium Term Financial Plan Update and Strategy**

Cabinet considered a report that provided an update on the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) position for 2012 to 2016.

Members were provided with a table detailing the current MTFP position of each service and were provided with details of areas of anticipated overspend and predicted pressures.

It was noted that the General Fund Balances had improved and were £1.7m above the required 3%. Members noted the main reasons for this.

Cabinet was reminded of the approved MTFP which had shown estimated budget gaps. Members noted that the Plan had been reviewed and were provided with details of a number of changes that needed to be incorporated into the current plan. An updated MTFP position was provided taking account of the changes.

The overall impact of the changes was to reduce the budget gap to

approximately £5.8m in 2014/15 rising to £8.2m by 2015/16

Members were reminded that in 2011/12 Council Tax was frozen and the equivalent increase was funded through Government Grant. This funding would be available for 2012/13 too, equivalent to a 2.5% increase. Critically this would be for one year only and if Stockton accepted this funding there would be significant pressure on the MTFP. Members were provided with details of this. Given the level of additional pressure the freeze would cause the 3.5% incorporated in the MTFP would be maintained for planning purposes.

Members noted issues relating to identified and potential savings coming from the EIT reviews and the position with regard to reserves and one off resources.

An updated MTFP position was provided taking account of these savings and members noted the estimated budget gap.

Cabinet noted future uncertainties and the potential budget position and recognised the problems these uncertainties caused in terms of developing plans to address the budget gap. Given these uncertainties it was suggested that detailed planning be delayed and addressed as part of the 2013/14 budget cycle.

Members received information relating to the Capital budget and Capital Programme.

RESOLVED that

1. the current financial position be noted
2. the approach to the development of the 2012-16 MTFP, as detailed in the report to Cabinet, be noted.

**CAB
92/11**

Performance Report

Consideration was given to a report that outlined progress against performance for the year to date April to September 2011/12. It highlighted achievements against Council Plan objectives, areas for improvement, summary of Freedom of Information requests, complaints, commendations and comments, RIPA update and provides details of suggestions received through the staff suggestion scheme.

Performance was good at this 6 month point, with current progress predicted of 93% achievement of the Council Plan objectives and 81% achievement of the performance targets being met. Trends showed that actual achievement at year end tended to be lower but this was good progress at this stage. The Council was still receiving a significant number of Freedom of Information and Data Protection enquires with a similar number over the last 3 months to the first 3 months of this financial year. The staff suggestions scheme had received 11 suggestions over the last 6 month period. The 3rd year of the EIT Review programme was well underway and on track for delivery. Complaints, Comments and Commendations would continue to be monitored.

The reported detailed performance in the following themed areas:-

Economic Regeneration and Transport
Environment and Housing
Health and Wellbeing
Adults
Children and Young People
Community Safety
Corporate Health
Culture and Leisure

The report also detailed the performance with regard to Freedom of Information requests and Staff Suggestion Scheme.

It was reported to Cabinet on 20 May 2010 that new duties and responsibilities relating to the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (RIPA) legislation had been introduced. In particular, the new provisions included the requirement that Councillors in a local authority should review the authority's use of RIPA and set the policy at least once a year, and that Councillors should consider reports on the use of RIPA on at least a quarterly basis, to ensure that it was being used consistently with the authority's policy and that the policy remained fit for purpose. Cabinet, therefore, agreed that members should receive information on the use of RIPA in the regular Finance and Performance reports to Cabinet. Attached to the report was a summary of all investigations undertaken during the first 6 months of this financial year.

Monitoring the implementation of the EIT Review programme continued. Year 3 reviews were well underway and on track for completion by the end of the financial year. The details of each review and the current progress were attached at to the report.

With regard to Complaint, Compliments & Commendations and Comments in total, the Council received 257 complaints for the three months ended 30 September 2011. This compared to 221 complaints received in the same three month period last year. 95.1% (194) overall were responded to within timescales. The corporate timescale for responding to Stage 1 complaints was 10 working days. However, the timescales within Health and Social Care differ from the corporate timescale. For Children's Services the response timescale was 10 working days plus a further 10 working days given the complexity of some of the complaints. For Adults' Services, new regulations introduced on 1 April 2009 place a requirement on Council's to agree a timescale for a response with each individual complainant.

A total of 573 compliments, commendations and comments were received in the three month period to 30 September 2011, representing 408 compliments and commendations and 165 comments. This compared to a total of 716 in the same three month period last year.

Analysis and learning from complaints, compliments, comments, and commendations was discussed at Service Group Management Team Meetings, where trends in numbers and the nature of the complaint, comments or commendation was further investigated, leading to appropriate actions for improvement and sharing of learning. The report highlighted some of the main messages from the analysis.

RESOLVED that the levels of performance and proposed actions be noted.

**CAB
93/11** **Building Asset Review Update**

Consideration was given to an update on the building asset review previously reported to Cabinet in July 2011.

It was noted that the review had a target saving of £1m by 2014/15 and the report outlined a series of proposals, some of which would require further extensive consultation with a range of stakeholders. There were some proposals however where, subject to Cabinet approval, plans for implementation could begin immediately as they would have no impact on the public or service delivery. The strategy aimed to protect services provided in communities with savings delivered through co-location of services and vacation of back office buildings.

The review had also considered and incorporated the outcome of the EIT Review into Children's Centres, the outcome of the Youth Review and also the principles of future library provision reported to members in October. The proposals put forward were intended to improve accessibility to services and facilities, improve viability of community venues and embrace the Council's approach to Community Asset Transfer as well as generate savings. The approach would also support elements of the Third Sector Strategy relating to capacity building and sustainability of the local Voluntary and Community Sector.

Significant progress had been made in planning and delivering the accommodation moves required to reflect the changing service requirements arising from EIT reviews and to address the agreed aim to rationalise space and vacate a number of office buildings as outlined in the previous report to Cabinet. The anticipated timescales and cost savings of these proposals were summarised. Members had previously been advised of the progress made in vacating Gloucester House on the condition that a presence would be maintained in the building until such a time as disposal was deemed appropriate. Cabinet was advised that there may now be an opportunity to release the building earlier than originally anticipated for a use which was likely to be compatible with the regeneration objectives for the Town Centre. The proposals were subject to further negotiation and agreement, and it was therefore recommended that the position regarding vacation of the building be kept under review. If this could be achieved however, it would release the savings of £71,000 per year, as well as generating a significant capital receipt and providing a viable use of the building.

It was noted that a review would have to be undertaken regards the long term use and viability of the Education Centre which was currently used for a range of services but was projected to have a significant reduction in income, largely relating to a loss of external income from services that were previously funded from government grants.

Cabinet had previously outlined the approach to considering community buildings and the principle of developing co-located facilities. The current arrangements were that buildings were primarily seen as being for a single

purpose, historically managed by different services within the Council and there was minimal joint usage and sharing of facilities. Many of the Council's services delivered in the community were however potentially 'portable'; i.e. they could take place at or be delivered from a relatively flexible range of buildings or locations in the community. Whilst some may require discrete space, there was no necessity for separate buildings, the key issue being the services delivered in the area. The buildings within this category were Community Centres, Childrens Centres and Libraries and the current premises related budget for each was submitted.

The review was considering the utilisation of current buildings, the potential for improved utilisation and shared facilities and the most appropriate facility from which to deliver Council and Community based services. In line with previous reports, they would be considered in the following categories:

Level 1 – Buildings we would retain for delivering fixed / core services.

Level 2– A clear need for the building to be maintained to deliver community services

Level 3 – No clear rationale for retaining the building due to level of usage, potential to utilise other buildings in the area etc.

Level 4 – Building identified for sale.

The Council had in recent months, however, started to move to models of integrated service delivery and joint use of buildings e.g.

- Co-located Library and Service Centre at Thornaby
- Co located Library and Service Centre opened in November in Stockton.

This significant investment was already showing increased levels of access and there were opportunities for exploring similar models of service delivery across the Borough and other service areas.

It was noted that the Council had differential arrangements for the support, funding and management of community centres. There were currently 18 centres where there were lease arrangements in place with trustees of community groups who had responsibility for running and managing the centres. The Council had responsibility for funding capital maintenance of the centres but otherwise there was little annual financial support. The majority of centres therefore fell into the category of Level 2, i.e. there was evidence of need for the building to deliver community based services. There were however maintenance issues for a number of centres which, given the pressure on Council resources, would compete with other priorities to enable investment.

The initial work has also identified some capacity and skills issues with regard to the management of the centres and it was noted that there were also opportunities to explore asset transfer which could deliver significant benefits to organisations involved with such buildings, not least the opportunity to bid for funding which was not available to the Council and could enable investment to help address maintenance and condition issues. Other potential benefits of transfer would be the improvement to the long term future and viability of the centre and the potential to create stronger, more sustainable community organisations

Any transfer would however need the express agreement of leaseholders and trustees. It was also of note that the majority of arrangements in place were with community groups who may struggle with the capacity to develop asset transfer proposals and would also struggle to meet the criteria within our agreed strategy. Catalyst were lead partners on a bid for the Transforming Infrastructure Fund and one element of the bid, if successful, included some dedicated resource to facilitate the development of a Community Asset Trust, and to develop a forward strategy to enable this to be self sustaining. This would potentially provide all of the benefits of transfer whilst retaining the use of centres by management committees, as well as developing capacity within the sector to improve and enhance the management of the facilities. It was proposed that Council support this approach and work with Catalyst to explore opportunities. The work to date suggested that there may be some opportunities to explore rationalisation of facilities where specific buildings fell into the level 3 category. Cabinet approval was sought to allow detailed work and consultation to be undertaken with the respective management committees concerned.

Cabinet was advised of the 5 community centres directly managed by the Council and it was suggested that consultation now be undertaken with the management committees of each around reviewing arrangements with a view to removing the Council's subsidy over a 3 year period with appropriate support. This could be a combination of reducing costs through reviewing building management, increasing the income from improved commercial arrangements or exploring asset transfer. In addition to the benefits already outlined, these centres would also benefit from a reduction in business rates which would contribute to the cost reductions.

The report also identified a number of geographical areas where the Council would no longer directly deliver services, but would commission services from partner organisations. Potential providers would have the option to deliver services from the current buildings or from elsewhere in the area, and the costs associated with these options would be considered as part of the procurement exercise. It was therefore currently unclear whether there would be any ongoing requirement for these buildings or whether they would be surplus to requirements. The buildings in question were the New Life Family Centre (Billingham), Frederick Nattrass (Norton) and Riverbank (Thornaby).

Should these buildings continue to be required for Childrens Centres, then in line with the principles of the Strategy, the Council would look to maximise community use and would seek to progress Asset Transfer for New Life Family Centre and Riverbank Family Centre, and ensure any agreement enables childrens centre use and look to maximise community use. The Council had also received an application from the current leaseholder of New Life and this would be progressed in line with the Asset Transfer Strategy.

The situation regards Frederick Nattrass was however different. The Centre was close to the Primary school (it was formally part of the same building). Cabinet in October had noted the Council's position around school places and capital and there were a number of examples where school buildings which had previously been surplus to requirements were needed to be brought back into use to manage increases in places. Given the potential growth and volatility of pupil projections, we would not wish to transfer this facility and depending on

the outcome of the Childrens Centre procurement we would look at a short term lease / use arrangement to enable enhanced community based services to be delivered.

Following the review of Children's Centres, the current building at Thornaby Family Centre would be surplus to Council requirements and would be made available for transfer, which would save £25,000 per annum in running costs.

The library strategy previously approved by Cabinet agreed that there was a need for a differential approach to service provision along the lines of a hub and spoke model with a core facility in each of the main urban conurbations complemented by community facilities within localities. The emphasis on enhanced main sites, open longer hours and providing a wider range of services, required some capital investment but made better use of resources through reduced future revenue costs. The next stage of this review would assess options for co-location of services and consider the benefits and impacts prior to a further report to Cabinet.

Consideration was also given to the position with regard to other Council properties such as 98 Dovecot Street, 62 Dovecot Street, the Youth Space at Skinner Street, Stockton, as well as the progress regards youth café provision in the borough.

RESOLVED that:-

1. Officers be authorised to work with Community Groups to explore opportunities and options for asset transfer in line with the approved Asset Transfer Strategy, including working with Catalyst exploring the option of developing a Community Asset Trust.

2. Cabinet approve discussions progressing on the transfer of the New Life Centre following the approach by the current leaseholder and to advertise the following assets for transfer and/or disposal:

- Riverbank (this will include a condition of use as a childrens centre)
- Thornaby Family Centre
- 98 Dovecot Street
- Wrensfield Community Centre

3. Cabinet agree to explore the option for co-location of Services and rationalisation of facilities outlined in the report including consultation with stakeholders.

4. Cabinet approve the proposed review of the current utilisation of the Education Centre and assess its future long term viability.

**CAB
94/11**

Community Participation Budget - A Way Forward

Consideration was given to options for the future of the Community Participation Budget (CPB) which was currently set at £400K for 2011/12 and due to come to an end in March 2012.

CPB was allocated to ward members on the basis of population numbers in that ward and was used to fund the provision of a variety of small improvement schemes in the ward ranging from dog bins to road safety initiatives and planting schemes. In many cases it had also been used to lever in funds from a variety of other sources to deliver larger projects and as such, had demonstrated real value in local level democracy ensuring that residents and ward councillors had a resource that was available to target specific issues that may not otherwise attract mainstream funding. Details of examples demonstrating the positive impact the budget had had, were summarised.

The CPB therefore sat well with many of the principles of the local and national policies on community engagement in decision making and delivery of local projects and was a clear demonstration of how devolved community budgets could continue to make a real difference. The eligibility criteria for funding of projects was required to be reviewed periodically to reflect changing circumstances and issues that arose locally. The process for reviewing the criteria was undertaken annually by officers in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Transport.

The £400K CPB budget had however not been allocated in the current MTFP beyond March 2012 and therefore it was proposed that a recommendation for the funding to continue beyond this period be submitted to Council for consideration alongside any other budget setting recommendations reported separately.

RECOMMENDED to Council that the continuation of the Community Participation Budget at the current level of £400K beyond 2011/12, be approved.

**CAB
95/11**

Local Development Framework: Annual Monitoring Report

Members noted the completion of the Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) for 2010/2011, prior to it being submitted to the Secretary of State before the end of December 2011.

The AMR contained information about how the Council had performed against its Local Development Scheme and, following the adoption of the Core Strategy in March 2010, it also assessed progress made against the Local Development Framework's objectives using locally specific targets and indicators.

RECOMMENDED that Council note and endorse the Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Report 2010/11.

**CAB
96/11**

The amalgamation of Heads of Service Posts and arrangements for Appointment

Consideration was given to the proposed amalgamation of the posts of Head of Communications and Head of Human Resources, along with the proposed arrangements for appointment and recruitment.

It was noted that the Council's Head of Communications had resigned from her post in September 2011 and since that time, interim arrangements had been put in place so that full consideration could be given to whether the post should be

filled on a like for like basis. In addition, the Council's Head of Human Resources had also now indicated her wish to retire next year.

The Council's current policy on recruitment was that only essential vacancies should be filled and opportunities should be taken to reduce the establishment wherever possible through natural wastage. As a result of this policy, 672 vacancies had arisen between December 2010 and October 2011, of which only 122 had been filled, a net loss of 550 posts.

A review of the duties and responsibilities of these two particular posts indicated that there were some synergies, particularly around internal communications, employee engagement and organisational development, as well as some minor areas of duplication. Amalgamating the two posts would therefore enable some efficiencies to be made as well as generating a saving of £100,800 per annum including on costs, subject to the grade of the new post being unchanged. Amalgamating these job roles therefore provided an opportunity of retaining the essential duties and responsibilities of the two posts whilst generating significant savings.

The Council's Employment Procedure Rules require Cabinet to consider and refer to full Council recommendations for approval in respect of the arrangements for the appointment of Heads of Service. The current recruitment arrangements provided that all posts should be filled internally wherever possible both to provide redeployment opportunities for staff at risk of redundancy but also to potentially generate further savings. It was therefore recommended that the post be advertised internally only in the first instance but if a successful appointment could not be made, then a further report be brought back to Cabinet for consideration.

It was proposed that Cabinet recommend to Council that a Panel for the appointment of the Head of Human Resources and Communications be established in accordance with political balance requirements comprising the Leader or Cabinet Member for Corporate Management and Finance and the Cabinet Member for Access and Communities.

RECOMMENDED to Council that:-

- 1. the posts of Head of Communications and Head of Human Resources be amalgamated to form a joint Head of Service post.**
- 2. the grade of the post be established through the Councils job evaluation process.**
- 3. the proposed Appointment Panel arrangements be approved.**