

Cabinet

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday, 1st November, 2012.

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

Officers: N. Schneider (CEO); L. King, T. Montague, D. Hurwood (R); J. Humphreys (CESC); P. Dobson, R. Poundford, R. Kench (DNS); D. Bond, M. Henderson (LD)

Also in attendance: Cllr Phil Dennis, Cllr Terry Laing, Cllr Norma Wilburn, Cllr David Wilburn, C. Morris (Chairman of Stockton on Tees Local Safeguarding Children Board)

Apologies: Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy and Cllr David Rose,

CAB 81/12 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Beall declared a personal interest in the item entitled Stockton Local Safeguarding Children Annual Report 2011/12, under paragraph 11 of the Council's Code of Conduct for Members as his wife was the Business Manger to the Board.

Councillor Cook declared a personal interest in the item entitled Economic Climate Update Report, under paragraph 11 of the Council's Code of Conduct for Members, as he was a Member of the Durham and Tees Valley Airport Board, which was mentioned during discussion.

Cllr Cook declared a personal interest in the item entitled Parliamentary Constituencies Review, under paragraph 11, of the Council's Code of Conduct for Members, as he was employed within the constituency office of a local MP.

Cllr Dennis declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in the item entitled Economic Climate Update, as his employer was referred to in the report.

CAB 82/12 **Minutes of the meeting held on 4 October 2012**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2012 were confirmed as a correct record.

CAB 83/12 **LA Nominations**

In accordance with the procedure for the appointment of school governors, approved as Minute 84 of the Cabinet (11th May 2000), Cabinet was requested to approve the nomination to school Governing Body as detailed within the report.

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

Ian Ramsey CE School – Mrs L Hall
Roseberry Primary School – Ms L Turnbull - Shanks

CAB **Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report**

84/12

Members were presented with a copy of the Stockton-on-Tees Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual (SLSCB) Report. The Annual Report outlined the achievements and future challenges of the SLSCB.

An overview of safeguarding activities outlined in the report was summarised and attached to the report.

There was a requirement (under the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009) for Local Safeguarding Children Boards to produce and publish an annual report on the effectiveness of safeguarding in the local area, including the implementation of Serious Case Review action plans.

The Munro Review of Child Protection (2011) recommended that the requirements of this should be amended so that the report was shared with the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council, and subject to the passage of legislation, to the local Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chair of the new Health and Wellbeing Board (currently a 'shadow' Board in Stockton-on-Tees).

It was the intention of SLSCB to share this with all partner agencies and with those that had influence over the services provided to children and families in Stockton-on-Tees. The purpose of the report was:-

- To provide an outline of the main activities of SLSCB and achievements during 2011-12;
- To comment on the effectiveness of safeguarding activity and of SLSCB in supporting this;
- To provide the public and partner agencies with an overview of safeguarding activity;
- To identify gaps and challenges in service development in the year ahead.

SLSCB recognised that it needed to establish a link with the Health and Wellbeing Board to ensure that safeguarding arrangements were included and worked out within its remit.

Cabinet asked that the report be highlighted with all Members of the Council.

RESOLVED that the Annual Report of the Stockton-on-Tees Local Safeguarding Children Board be noted.

**CAB
85/12**

Local Business Rates Discount Scheme for Stockton Town Centre

Members considered a report relating to the introduction of a Local Business Rates Discount Scheme as an incentive to businesses to occupy vacant units in Stockton Town Centre.

It was noted that Stockton had a vacancy rate of 15%.

The Scheme would include all vacant units within the primary and secondary shopping areas of the Town Centre, as well as the Cultural Quarter and The Yards.

All new and expanding businesses investing in the Scheme area would be eligible to apply directly for support. Landlords and their commercial representatives would, however, not be eligible.

The Scheme was primarily aimed at retail and other associated Town Centre business activities. Businesses would operate, primarily, within the A1, A2, A3 and B1 business activities, as defined by the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order, unless specifically excluded. Members were provided with examples of which businesses would be excluded and included. Full details would be provided in the scheme. Cabinet noted that Employment Agencies would not be excluded.

The Scheme would be inclusive of all sizes of vacant units within the Scheme area; however it must include the ground floor as well as any other vacant floors to maximise the visual appearance of, and the economic impact to, the Town Centre.

A discount of 50% of the net rates payable per year (i.e. the rates charge remaining after deduction of other reliefs and entitlements such as small business rate relief) would be offered to each new or expanding business for a maximum of 2 years, if occupying and trading from a vacant unit in the Scheme area.

RESOLVED that:-

1. the Local Business Rate Discount Scheme for Stockton Town Centre described in the report, be introduced from April 2013 subject to funding being approved as part of the 2013/14 budget report.
2. that the Scheme recommended in this report, together with the existing Enterprise Zone Scheme, provide the only local business rate discounts awarded by the Council.

**CAB
86/12** **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.

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 undertaken to date supported.

**CAB
87/12** **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:-

The Culture Partnership – 9 May 2012

Health and Wellbeing Partnership – 12 June 2012

Tees Valley Unlimited – Leadership Board – 25 July 2012

Northern Area Partnership – 3 September 2012

Central Area Partnership Board – 27 September 2012

CAB
88/12 **Asset Review Update**

Members considered a report that provided an update on the Asset Review and built on earlier reports to Members in 2011 and in June 2012. The report had previously been considered at a meeting of the Executive Scrutiny Committee on 23rd October and that Committee had supported the recommendations as set out in the report.

In September 2011, Stockton Borough Council Cabinet approved a differentiated Library Service model in which some sites would have a larger range of products and services and be open longer hours, whilst others would be reduced.

Applying the principles of the differentiated service model, Cabinet in December 2011 agreed to explore rationalisation and co-location of Fairfield, Roseworth, Thornaby Westbury Street, Eaglescliffe, and Billingham Bedale, and to give full consideration to the likely impact of any changes in each case. The December Cabinet paper acknowledged the key sites as Stockton Central, Thornaby Central, Billingham, Yarm, Ingleby Barwick, and Norton. The same report highlighted capital investment already made in Stockton and Thornaby, and planned for Norton and Billingham. In Billingham the commitment was given to creating a new town centre library and customer service facility.

Throughout this Review the Council had considered its statutory responsibility to provide a comprehensive service. The Council had also considered the outcomes of judicial reviews relating to reviews of services in other parts of the country

With these cases and guidelines in mind, the process of reviewing options for the future in Stockton had focused on the users of the service, and its accessibility to those diverse communities.

The Council had undertaken a 6 week consultation on people's preferences for different aspects of the service, for what parts of the service were most valued, rather than which branches or service points people use or would like to retain. Over 1200 responses were received from a broad cross section of the community. The key messages were that a wide ranging and up to date book stock (73.7% rated this most important) was still the most important feature of the service, with well trained and friendly staff to provide good access to this (72.6% rated this as most important).

Other factors which received general support were a wide range of information

materials, the ability to borrow and return books to any branch library (50.8%), and activities for children and young people. 49% rated Sunday opening as least important, and 59% said it was least important for libraries to be open on Bank Holidays.

General comments on the service show an understanding by respondents to the survey that change is necessary and there is support for the co-location of libraries with other appropriate services.

There were 40,000 active borrowers whose use of the service we could track, but in addition there were many thousand users who do not borrow items and whose usage patterns we are seeking to understand through focus groups and survey comments. Levels of usage were an indication of demand and likely future usage, and distance to the nearest library was a significant factor.

Combining all the relevant data and intelligence, officers had explored a wide range of scenarios, including closures, integration, reduced opening hours, and partnerships with community organisations.

In terms of consultation on phase 2 proposals it was suggested that Stockton Borough Council continue to invest in the fabric and equipment of the main 'town centre' branches, retaining extended opening hours where they were currently offered, staffed by expert professionals, and providing an up to date and relevant book stock. The major investment in the creation of a new Library and Customer Service facility in Thornaby, and the refurbishment of Stockton Central, should be mirrored in Billingham, delivering the widest possible range of services, stock, and equipment in the most efficient manner possible.

The Council was investing £2.7m in the new Billingham Town Centre facilities and it was proposed that this would replace Roseberry and Bedale Libraries. The Bedale Library building would be offered for asset transfer to community ownership or for sale. Mobile library visits to the 'Old Billingham' area should be increased to support those users who might be unable to attend the new Town Centre facility.

It was proposed that Westbury Street, Roseworth, Eaglescliffe and Fairfield Libraries be integrated into appropriate community facilities in their vicinity. Library staffing hours would be reduced for each site. This would retain an accessible staffed library service presence. Integration would require investment in equipment, shelving, furniture and stock which would improve the quality and feel of the service. Linkages to other services in the facilities could provide additional value and efficiency.

The suggested facility for co-location of Westbury Street Library was the Riverbank Children's Centre. The suggested facility for Roseworth Library was the Redhill Childrens' Centre. Appropriate facilities were still being considered for co-location of Eaglescliffe and Fairfield Libraries. However, in respect of Eaglescliffe Library, consideration was being given to the projected growth in the number of households in that area and to the potential to find a location closer to the areas of growth and to communities furthest from the closest alternative branch.

Where a suggested co-location option was not identified, the reduction in staff

hours and opening hours should happen at the same time as the changes in other areas, rather than waiting until a long term co-location option was found.

It was recommended that, in addition to staff changes and reductions required to operate the reconfigured Library sites, it was possible to remove 2 posts which currently supported all branches. The duties carried out by the posts in question could be integrated into the roles of other staff.

Each of the proposals would now be subject to Equality Impact Assessments.

The total anticipated revenue saving that could be achieved by the changes outlined above was around £360,000.

Members then considered issues relating to the Education Development Centre at Norton. Previous reports to Cabinet had identified the need to consider the long term use and viability of the Centre. A summary of the findings of the review was provided and it was noted that

- Income achieved for training facilities would be less than budgeted, resulting in a budgetary pressure.
- Training and conference space was utilised for less than 40% of the available time between the hours of 9am and 5pm and for less than 15% between the hours of 5pm and 9pm.
- the Centre provided an office base for a significant number of staff, totalling around 80, the majority providing support to schools.
- The Centre was used by a number of external organisations. The outdoor space was used informally for football, although there were no changing facilities available.
- Catering was provided to users/occupants of the building, although this service operated at an annual loss.
- There were also significant maintenance issues. In excess of £500,000 was required in the medium term to address these.

If a closure option was to be considered, then identification of suitable alternative provision would be essential. In this respect an assessment had been made of the potential viability of utilising the former City Learning Centre at Billingham (Campus Site). Indications were that the building could be used as an alternative training venue adequate to meet the required need for CESC related training, providing three conference rooms, and also a base for 30 staff. The facility would also offer some spare training room capacity for use by other services. In order for this building to become a suitable alternative location, some internal re-configuration would be required and additional car parking spaces would be needed.

Analysis had also been undertaken of the meeting room capacity within the council's main administrative buildings. This analysis indicated a significant amount of overall surplus capacity.

There would remain a need for access to larger conference/training facilities on an occasional basis. Possible options included greater use of the Jim Cooke Conference Suite and the refurbished facilities at Preston Hall. However, some use of external facilities would be required for larger scale events and for this reason it was recommended that a budget for such external room hire be created (c£25,000pa) and co-ordinated centrally.

Closure of the EDC would require re-provision of accommodation for around 80 staff and it was considered that vacant office space remained that could be utilised to provide space for those displaced.

Given the level of usage and the ability to relocate the significant majority of services it was recommended that this facility be closed and the site considered for disposal. Annual revenue savings of between £200,000 and annum would be achieved. This figure would allow for funding of the operating costs of the Billingham CLC and creation of a fund to allow rent of external facilities where necessary.

Ward members present, referred to the significance of the building within the community. They indicated that they would wish to investigate the feasibility of a possible Community Asset Transfer and it was noted that this could be picked up as part of the suggested options appraisal.

Cabinet then considered Hardwick Pool and Gym. Members were reminded that the Council had made significant investments in modern and accessible pool provision across the Borough. Previously the Council funded the running costs of Abbey Hill Pool as it was used by the Youth Service and by the Primary School Swimming Programme. Both of these uses had now ceased and the majority of use is by the School itself.

The previous report to Executive Scrutiny and Cabinet identified that the School was to assess options for taking on responsibility for the pool building. Given that the running costs were approximately £65,000 per year with outstanding maintenance of around £130,000, and given the relative priority in comparison to the Gym, the School would not be in a position to take on the management of the facility and this would now close.

Members noted the Equality Impact Assessment associated with the Pool facility

Members were provided with an update in respect of Asset Transfer and the Community Asset Transfer Scheme being developed by Catalyst. Cabinet noted that expressions of interest in the properties at 98 Dovecot Street and Primrose Hill Community Centre had been received.

A further report, updating progress and presenting the results of the consultation on the Libraries Service, together with updates on Youth and Community facilities will be presented to Executive Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in the new year.

RESOLVED that:-

1. a second phase of consultation be undertaken on the proposals in respect of the Libraries Service.
2. the relocation of services from the Education Development Centre and the subsequent closure be approved, which will be followed by an option appraisal to determine the future of the site.
3. given the Council's investment in modern, accessible pool provision at SPLASH and Billingham Forum and confirmation that the School could not fund the running costs of the Abbey Hill Pool, the facility would now close.
4. the progress with respect to Asset Transfer and the CAT Scheme being developed by Catalyst be noted.
5. following receipt of expressions of interest in the properties at 98 Dovecot Street and Primrose Hill Community Centre, these properties now be advertised for disposal or asset transfer in line with the agreed strategy.

**CAB
89/12** **Parliamentary Constituencies Review**

Consideration was given to a report that provided details of the revised proposals for new parliamentary constituency boundaries published by the Boundary Commission for England ("BCE") on 16 October.

Representations on the BCE's initial proposals were agreed by Council at its meeting on 1 December 2011 and a copy of the representations were detailed within the report.

The review entered a secondary consultation phase on 6 March 2012. This concluded on 3 April 2012. The secondary consultation allowed interested parties to submit further comments on the representations received by the BCE on their initial proposals.

At its meeting on 8 March, Cabinet agreed that the Council's original representations should be reaffirmed for the purposes of the secondary consultation period. This was done and the decision to do so, in consultation with the Mayor, was reported to Council on 2 May 2012.

The BCE published revised proposals for new parliamentary constituency boundaries on 16 October.

The details affecting the administrative area of Stockton-on-Tees were attached to the report.

Members considered whether any representations should be made to the BCE on these revised proposals. It had been suggested that as regards the proposed Stockton North and Aycliffe Constituency, given the respective sizes of the electorate of the Billingham, Stockton and Aycliffe/Sedgefield wards, the name of the Constituency should be Stockton North, Billingham and Aycliffe. It was also indicated that the BCE should be advised that the administration of parliamentary elections for both of the revised Stockton North and Stockton South constituencies should remain with Stockton on Tees Borough Council.

The final consultation period on the revised proposals concluded on 10 December 2012. This final consultation would not include any public hearings, nor was there an opportunity for commenting on the representations of others.

The BCE would consider any representations made during the final consultation period about the revised proposals and would make its final decisions about whether further revisions were needed in light of these representations.

Once the BCE had decided on its final recommendations for the whole of England, it would then draft and submit a formal report to Government. The report, which would be published, would contain a description of the review in each region, a textual description of all of the final recommendations, and a set of maps to illustrate the existing constituency boundaries and those proposed by the final recommendations.

The submission of the formal, final report would conclude the review process and a further report would be presented to Cabinet once this stage had been reached.

RECOMMENDED to Council that:-

1. the report be noted.

2 further representation be submitted to the BCE regarding their revised proposals in line with the suggestion above and as detailed in paragraph 12 of the report.

3. a further report be submitted to Cabinet when the final consultation period had finished and the BCE had reported formally to Government.