

# Cabinet

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday, 13th June, 2013.

**Present:** Cllr Robert Cook (Chair); Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr David Coleman, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr David Harrington, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr Steve Nelson and Cllr Michael Smith.

**Officers:** J Danks, B Brown, L King (R); R Poundford, M Batty, M Clifford (DNS); J Humphreys, S McLurg, L Brown, E Jewitt (CESC), P Kelly (PH); J Grant, P K Bell (LD).

**Also in attendance:** Cllr Phil Dennis, Members of the public.

**Apologies:** Cllr David Rose.

## **CAB 24/13**      **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Nelson declared a personal interest in respect of agenda item 8 – Economic Climate Update as he was a member of Tristar Board.

Councillor Beall declared a prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 13 – Year One of the Troubled Families Programme as he was the Chair of the Eastern Ravens Board and did not speak or vote in respect of the item.

Councillor Nelson declared a personal interest in respect of agenda item 13 – Year One of the Troubled Families Programme as he was a member of Tristar Board.

## **CAB 25/13**      **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th May 2013 were confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

## **CAB 26/13**      **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:-

Grangefield School – Councillor Michael Clark

## **CAB 27/13**      **Nomination / Appointment of LA Governors to Maintained Schools & Academies**

Consideration was given to a report that proposed a procedure for nominating Local Authority Governors to serve on school governing bodies that had reconstituted under The School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012. This procedure needed to be agreed by Members as the accepted protocol for the process.

The report also recommended an addition to the current Local Authority

Governor appointment procedure, to formalise the inclusion of the appointment of Local Authority Governors to Academies, as and when required.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The new procedure for nominating Local Authority Governors to reconstituted governing bodies be adopted.
2. The appointment of Local Authority Governors to Academies be included in the current appointment procedure.
3. Consultation be undertaken with Governing Bodies to develop outline guidance on the criteria that they may wish to use when requesting nominations for LA Governor representatives.

**CAB  
28/13**      **Ofsted Inspection of Child Protection**

Consideration was given to a report on the Ofsted Inspection of Child Protection. Ofsted undertook an unannounced child protection inspection in January 2013, which was the first inspection in the North East region under the new framework. The overall judgement was adequate.

A number of areas for further development were identified, particularly in relation to the Referral and Assessment Team, which reflected the Council's self assessment of the service at the time.

An action plan had been developed to respond to the recommendations arising from the inspection Work and this had been approved by Stockton-on-Tees Local Safeguarding Children Board (SLSCB).

In the course of the inspection the inspectors looked at over 100 cases and were satisfied that appropriate action had been taken to protect all children at risk of immediate harm. There were a number of areas for further development identified, particularly in relation to the Referral and Assessment Team (RAT), which reflected the Council's self assessment of the service at the time. The overall judgement was adequate.

The report, which was published on the Ofsted website on 15 February 2013, contained a number of recommendations, divided into three categories; those to be completed immediately, within 3 months and within 6 months.

Children Education and Social Care (CESC) and partner agencies had developed an Action Plan which was attached to the report and had been approved by Stockton-on-Tees Local Safeguarding Children Board (SLSCB).

As of 23 April 2013, 40 Local Authorities had received an unannounced child protection inspection. The outcomes of these inspections were as follows:-

- 4 Good (10%)
- 23 Adequate (57.5%)
- 13 Inadequate (32.5%)

Whilst there was a range of recommendations for children's social care services and partner agencies to consider, the inspectors were very clear that the primary area of concern related to the functioning of RAT.

Temporary arrangements had been put in place to address the recommendations requiring immediate action, whilst discussions had taken place regarding longer term options. A management development day involving the Corporate Director CESC, Head of Children and Young People's Services and key Service / Team Managers took place on 1 February 2013. Proposals arising from the day were subsequently shared with all children's social care staff for comment and debate. The proposals contained within the report were the result of these discussions.

The substantive staffing complement within RAT was as follows:-

- 1 x full time equivalent (FTE) Team Manager
- 1 x FTE Deputy Manager
- 10 x FTE Social Workers
- 1 x FTE Family Worker

In order to respond to the workload pressures which had been reported to Cabinet on a regular basis, additional temporary agency staff had been agreed by Corporate Director as follows:-

- 1 x FTE Deputy Manager
- 5 x FTE Social Workers

At any given time, RAT may also have Student Social Workers on placement with them. There were 3 at the time of writing.

Prior to the inspection, a number of concerns about the functioning of RAT had been identified through internal management and quality assurance systems and these were in the process of being addressed.

Every initial and core assessment had to be quality assured and agreed by a manager. This involved reading all of the documentation and making a decision as to the most appropriate way forward for the child concerned. This task had to be completed within a timely fashion as assessments were not regarded as being completed until the manager had made this decision and signed the necessary paperwork. The Team Manager or Deputy Manager would also be required to chair a range of meetings such as planning meetings and strategy meetings in respect of individual children. In addition, the Team Manager was responsible for all aspects of the team's functions including work allocation, supervision of staff, workload review and performance management.

In the light of this, the team was not considered to be viable at its current size and so it was proposed to divide RAT into two separate teams, nominally divided on a geographical basis. This had the benefit of retaining a discrete focus on referral and assessment work, whilst ensuring the teams were maintained at a manageable size and aligning the teams more closely with Fieldwork teams.

Based on current workloads, the make up of the two teams would be as

follows:-

- 1 x FTE Team Manager
- 1 x FTE Deputy Manager
- 7 x FTE Social Workers
- 1 x FTE Family Worker

Whilst Ofsted commented favourably on the functioning of First Contact, it was also intended to review the remit and parameters of the team. As part of this, it was proposed to pilot an enhanced social work presence within the team which could potentially prevent some inappropriate referrals entering the system and also reduce the need for some of the lower priority work to proceed to RAT, which would then allow RAT to focus on the higher priority children in need and child protection cases.

The remit of First Contact was also being considered as part of the Access to Services review.

In order to strengthen the working arrangements between First Contact and the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) Team and Family Support Team, these two teams would be moved into a newly reconfigured First Response service area. This also had the added benefit of helping to retain balanced service manager portfolios.

On 3 September 2012, at the launch of the new structure arising from the Efficiency, Improvement and Transformation (EIT) Review of Children's Social Care, there were 1194 children active to the Fieldwork service. This included Child Protection, Public Law Outline (PLO) [pre Care Proceedings]/Care Proceedings, Looked After Children (LAC) and Children in Need. There were no unallocated cases at this point.

In terms of average Social Worker caseloads across the 6 teams, this equated to the following:-

North 1 - 19.9 children  
North 2 - 31.1 children  
North 3 - 31.1 children

South 1 - 26.3 children  
South 2 - 29.3 children  
South 3 - 23.1 children

As of 20 February 2013, the overall number of children active to the Fieldwork service had increased by a further 176 children to 1370. Of these, 76 children were unallocated.

In terms of average Social Worker caseloads across the 6 teams, this equates to the following:-

North 1 - 24.9 children  
North 2 - 33.2 children  
North 3 - 33.2 children

South 1 - 35.7 children  
South 2 - 33.6 children  
South 3 - 32.3 children

According to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's caseload management system, the optimum caseload for an experienced social worker would be in the region of 25 children.

The average caseloads across the North East region range from 21 to 32, with Stockton-on-Tees having the highest caseloads and approximately half of the authorities having caseloads under 25.

The situation was not sustainable and was placing social workers and managers under extreme pressure. It was also having a significant impact on key performance indicators as evidenced by the recent inspection and our own internal performance monitoring information. It would be extremely difficult to respond positively to the wider service issues raised by Ofsted in this climate. Notwithstanding this, staff morale remained reasonably strong and the workforce continued to display a high level of goodwill.

It was calculated that an additional 6 experienced Social Workers would be required in order to return caseloads to post EIT levels. This would result in average caseloads of approximately 25.

This would result in Team Managers in the Fieldwork service typically having responsibility for 8 Social Workers, a Senior Family Worker and a Family Worker i.e. 10 staff in total. Given the range of tasks outlined in section 11, this was considered to be the maximum safe span of control for Team Managers in this service area.

Whilst the Council continued to be able to recruit Social Workers, the overwhelming majority of applications received were from newly qualified practitioners. In order to be able to recruit more experienced Social Workers and retain a more balanced workforce profile, we would propose to reintroduce a 'golden hello' payment but restrict this to practitioners with significant post qualifying experience.

In the medium to long term, the development of, and investment in, a successful Early Help Strategy was seen as crucial in ultimately reducing the number of children and young people requiring intensive, and expensive, social care intervention.

As part of this overall strategy, one option would be to increase investment in family support services with a view to preventing some children moving across the continuum of need or 'windscreen' and therefore requiring specialist intervention.

An expansion of the newly created Family Support Team would be one possible way of achieving this. Given the number of staff in the team, this would require the creation of two teams working in parallel; either on a functional or geographical basis.

The existing Deputy Manager post could be converted to a Team Manager post

and the creation of 4 additional Family Worker posts would result in two teams of 7 workers which would significantly enhance current capacity.

Whilst it was important to stress that this would not be a panacea for the workload pressures it would strengthen resources for those families who were already in the CAF arena and at risk of moving into the child protection or looked after systems. This could be initially considered as a time limited investment in order to test out whether this was likely to be an effective longer term strategic option.

In light of the inspection it had been decided to review the content and format of future children's social care workload pressures reports to Cabinet

In addition to a range of measures to illustrate the pressures experienced by the service, a number of performance indicators would also be included so that Cabinet could more closely monitor the impact of these pressures on performance and outcomes for children.

A suggested template was attached to the report. This revised format used a 'process model' as a way of illustrating:-

- the flow of business into children's social care (inputs)
- the efficiency and effectiveness of the service in managing the business (processes)
- the impact that these processes have on the children and young people involved (outputs)

Given the importance and profile of these issues it was proposed that the new activity and performance reports were brought to Cabinet on a bi monthly basis i.e. every alternate Cabinet meeting.

A decision had been made to commission an external research study in order to gain a deeper understanding of the reasons behind these ongoing workload pressures. Discussions were taking place with the Institute of Local Governance (ILG) in order to agree the focus of this research and any significant outcomes emerging from this be included in future reports to Cabinet.

#### **RESOLVED:-**

1. The Action Plan set out in Appendix 1 be endorsed.
2. Children and Young People Select Committee receive regular reports and updates so that progress can be monitored.
3. The additional staffing resources set out in Sections 13 – 33 of the report be agreed.
4. The proposed format for future children's social care activity and performance reports to Cabinet as outlined in Appendix 2 be approved.

Consideration was given to a report on the Draft Supplementary Planning Document 8 – Provision of Affordable Housing and the Need for Viability Evidence.

The Council's affordable housing requirement was set out in Core Strategy Policy CS8. The Core Strategy (2010) recognised that the Council's Planning Obligations SPD (2008) would require updating to reflect the new Core Strategy policy. This Supplementary Planning Document would provide clear planning guidance on determining appropriate 'affordable housing' contributions.

SPDs must be subject to public consultation prior to their adoption as part of the Borough's Development Plan. It was intended that the draft SPD would undergo public consultation between July and September 2013. At a recent public inquiry the appellant put forward an interpretation of Policy CS8 which differed from the Local Planning Authority's (LPA) interpretation of that policy. This SPD would assist in clarifying the correct interpretation.

The SPD was attached to the report, and was accompanied by a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Scoping Report and an Equalities Impact Assessment. The HRA Scoping Report concluded that a full HRA was not required for this SPD. These documents were also available in the members' library and the Council agenda system. The draft Consultation Statement which must be produced alongside an SPD was also attached to the report.

**RECOMMENDED to Council that:-**

- 1. The contents of this report be noted.**
- 2. The 'Draft Supplementary Planning Document 8 – Provision of Affordable Housing and the need for Viability Evidence' for public Consultation be agreed.**
- 3. Minor amendments to the contents of the document be delegated to Officers prior to the consultation period.**

**CAB  
30/13 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  
31/13 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:-

Stockton on Tees Local Safeguarding Children Board – 17th January 2013  
The Housing and Neighbourhood Partnership – 26th February 2013  
Safer Stockton Partnership – 19th March 2013

**CAB      Medium Term Financial Plan Update**

**32/13**

Cabinet considered a report relating to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)

The report focused on the financial performance and position at the end of the 2012/13 financial year and provided an update of the MTFP. It was explained that the financial outlook continued to be uncertain with indications of further funding reductions as part of the Spending Review in June. Officers would continue to manage finances carefully in light of the uncertainty.

Cabinet was provided with a table detailing the current MTFP position.

Members were reminded of the financial pressures within Children and Adult Social Care. Both of these areas were subject to 'Big Ticket' reviews.

Members noted some areas of improvement in the position of the Children, Education and Social Care service.

Details of the main variances within Development and Neighbourhood Services were highlighted including an increase in Planning fee receipts and costs associated with waste management.

It was explained that, within the Resources Service, savings in Finance and Procurement, and Taxation and Administration had been achieved.

Cabinet was informed of the improving position with regard to the General Fund Balances and was provided with a table detailing the Capital budget 2012/18. A number of changes to the Capital budget had taken place during the year and members were provided with details of these, together with the associated cost variations.

RESOLVED that:

1. The Medium Term Financial Plan and the current level of general fund balances be approved.
2. The financial uncertainty surrounding the Spending Review and the continued planned approach to financial management and delivery of efficiencies be noted.

**CAB      Year End 2012/13 Performance Outturn**

**33/13**

Consideration was given to a report that provided details of the Council's performance in 2012/13, highlighting achievements, areas for improvement and



proposed actions and included information relating to Freedom of Information requests, complaints and commendations and the staff suggestion scheme. Whilst it aimed to give a perspective on the overall performance of the Council its primary focus was on the achievement of the basket of measures and associated targets agreed as part of the Council Plan development.

Council Plan performance was reported against a basket of performance indicators within the individual Council Plan themes agreed as part of the process for developing the Council Plan. 71% of the targets had been achieved with some achieving significantly above target and in a number of instances the measure was not significantly off target. There were some targets which relied on comparator information and/or nationally released data which was not available. The details in relation to areas of good performance were given within the report. The areas where performance had not met target were generally linked to the economic climate and areas within Children, Education and Social Care both of which had been reported to Members throughout the year through the regular reports to Cabinet on the economic climate update, children's social care pressures and the annual education report were all available via the Council e-genda system.

There were a wide range of achievements and progress against the key council plan themes that were not captured within the basket of key performance indicators but had been reported throughout the year in various reports to Cabinet, captured in the Annual Review and Leaders Statement the outcomes from the independent residents survey (previously reported to Cabinet and Members) and demonstrated through the various awards such as APSE, UK Housing Award – Strategic Local Authority of the Year, Customer Service Excellence, nomination for the Arts Fund Museum of the Year, Britain in Bloom etc., positive inspection outcomes that had also been reported to Cabinet and Council and the wide range of year round events and activities. The primary focus for the report was achievement against the corporate basket of indicators within the Council Plan.

The report highlighted:-

- Good Performance
- Areas for Improvement
- Freedom of Information Requests
- Staff Suggestion Scheme
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers (RIPA)
- Consultation
- Complaints, Comments, Compliments and Commendations

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

**CAB  
34/13**

### **Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000("RIPA")**

Cabinet considered a report that presented the Council's Corporate Policy and Procedures Document for 2013/14 and provided details of the Council's surveillance activity during 2012/13.

Members were reminded that the Council's policy and procedures document had been reviewed and revised to reflect legislative changes. Members were

directed to where they could access the document.

Cabinet was provided with details relating to the Council's RIPA activity during 2012/13, including details relating to:

- directed surveillance
- Covert Human Intelligence Source
- Communications data

RESOLVED that:-

1. The Council's RIPA Corporate Policy and Procedures Document for 2013/14 be confirmed.
2. The details relating to the Council's RIPA activity during 2012/13 be noted.

**CAB 35/13 Year One of the 'Troubled Families' Programme**

Cabinet considered a report relating to the 'Troubled Families' programme in Stockton.

Members were reminded that contracts concerned with the delivery of the programme had been set up with Tees Valley Housing (60%) and the VCS Synergy Consortium (40%).

Members received details of issues and initiatives associated with the programme. In addition details of the revised budget projections were provided and it was noted that a balance of £772,967 was anticipated at the end of year 3. Given this it was proposed that the programme continue for a 4th year.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The delivery of the programme is extended for a fourth year, subject to satisfactory performance and to the availability of funding within the 'Troubled Families' budget.
2. A further report be submitted during 2014/15 examining in more detail the case for continuing funding from the Council's 'Invest to Save' budget to a continuation of the programme beyond 2015/16.

**Chair .....**