

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

13 FEBRUARY 2014

REPORT OF REGENERATION AND TRANSPORT SELECT COMMITTEE

CABINET DECISION

CORPORATE MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Harrington

REVIEW OF USE OF DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Summary

The attached report presents the Regeneration and Transport Select Committee findings following the Scrutiny Review of Use of Demographic Information.

Demographic information is deemed to be the statistical characteristics of the population. Its availability, quality, and use is key to the Council's strategic planning, decision making, and for targeted initiatives and interventions. Using information that is held more effectively could ensure that greater intelligence and customer insight is gained allowing targeted resources to those that would gain the most benefit, thereby ensuring the best value for money.

2. Recommendations

The Committee recommend that:

1. work be undertaken on data sharing protocols to ensure the effective sharing of data across the Council and also possibly with partners.
2. further consideration be given to joining LG Inform Plus when cost and regional interest levels show it to be of potential benefit to Stockton Council
3. a toolkit be developed (in line with the introduction of the new Council Plan structure) for use throughout the Council by officers to determine information use and sharing of said information.
4. understanding demographic information is an element with the Council's Member Development programme.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

1. A series of case studies was used to gain an understanding as to how data and intelligence was being used in policy setting and decision making which suggested that information is held in departments but is not always fully available across the authority nor fully utilised when policies are being formulated.

2. The Committee learnt of LG Inform which provides, in a single place, up to date published data about local authority areas and the performance of councils. Early discussions are taking place at regional level suggested that the 12 North East local authorities would join LG Inform Plus, a subscription service that allows the data in LG Inform to be drilled down to small area information and therefore have the benefit of improved data sharing and awareness amongst its neighbours.
3. The development of a toolkit, was considered by the Committee as a not too onerous way of ensuring ease of the use of and sharing of information throughout the Council which could then be developed further to become an electronic document for use throughout the Council. The toolkit is expected to contain the following:
 - Purpose of the toolkit
 - Data sources
 - Checklist
 - Data Quality
 - Data Sharing Protocols
 - Other Help and support
4. On 27 November 2013 Cabinet agreed changes to the Cabinet report template so that reports are required to indicate which of the Council Plan themes and priority areas they support. Strengthening the toolkit of policy aims, the Committee believe, could ensure it is mainstreamed into the decision-making process.
5. It must also be ensured that councillors can recognise the demographic information being presented and its use for possible decisions being taken.

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 (**paragraphs 10 and 11 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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SUMMARY

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RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommend that:

1. work be undertaken on data sharing protocols to ensure the effective sharing of data across the Council and also possibly with partners.
2. further consideration be given to joining LG Inform Plus when cost and regional interest levels show it to be of potential benefit to Stockton Council
3. a toolkit be developed (in line with the introduction of the new Council Plan structure) for use throughout the Council by officers to determine information use and sharing of said information.
4. understanding demographic information is an element with the Council's Member Development programme.

DETAIL

1. Councillor Rose, Stockton Council's Cabinet Member for Environment submitted the suggestion for this review as many funding and resource allocations are based on existing data, for example geographical or poverty indicators particularly based on local ward boundaries.
2. The aim of the review was therefore to:
 - provide a better understanding of what demographic information is held across the Council, within key partner organisations, and is available nationally.
 - clarify where demographic information is filed/located/available
 - better understand how this information can be used in policy making.

- identify any gaps in intelligence and the resource implications of filling the gaps.
 - identify any potential issues with respect to the identified data and any barriers to its use (e.g. information sharing).
3. Members felt that information needed to be easy to find and understand. To get a better sense of the type and use of information the Committee asked that a number of case studies be presented. They looked across Council service areas, the ease of gathering the information and its ease of understanding, especially when this information was required when making decisions.
 4. The Committee also asked for research to be undertaken on other local authorities and public sector organisations to ascertain how they had resolved to utilise the wealth of information that appeared to be available and how this could possibly be incorporated for use in Stockton Council.
 5. Members showed particular interest in the approach taken by Cornwall Council having produced a Policy Framework Toolkit, which aimed to promote good practice, ensuring a consistent approach to policy development to deliver meaningful improvements to their residents.
 6. An outline toolkit began to be developed for consideration by the R&T Select Committee to determine its possible usefulness for use in the Council and contained the following:
 - Foreword – Identifying why it was important to produce a toolkit.
 - Purpose of this toolkit - What is demographic information / Why it is important / Culture of organisation / What data can be used for - Policy making, Strategy forming, Decision making etc / Pathways
 - Data source - Internal sources (Councils Data Systems, Existing documents e.g. Data profiles, EIA's Consultation Results, councils web site / External sources – ONS web site, LG inform, Data.gov.uk etc / Consultation / engagement results
 - Checklist - Toolkit – Good Practice Guide / Presenting the information / Skills / Forecasting / Analysis and interpretation
 - Data Quality – Accuracy / Relevance / Timeliness / Currency / Clarity of geography / Meta Data / Governance
 - Data Sharing Protocols - Existing Protocols / Legislation / Some good practice examples
 - Other Help and support – contact information
 7. On 27 November 2013 Cabinet agreed changes to the Cabinet report template so that reports are required to indicate which of the Council Plan themes and priority areas they support. Councillor Rose assisted the Committee by highlighting that two of the themes deal with 'targeted interventions' and 'protecting the most vulnerable'. Effective use of demographic and socio-economic data should underpin this and strengthening the toolkit of policy aims could ensure it is mainstreamed into the decision-making process.
 8. The use of a toolkit could also be demonstrated to have been used by reference in council/cabinet/committee report papers. To reduce its onerousness it was suggested that any reference to the toolkit and demographic information could be included as part of the background papers feature of the report template.
 9. With the addition of this information it must be ensured that councillors can recognise the demographic information being presented and its use for possible decisions being taken.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

1. None

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

2. None

RISK ASSESSMENT

3. This review of use of demographic information is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

4. Stronger Communities

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5. This report is not subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

6. None

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Education related?

No

Background Papers

None

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Not ward specific

Property

None