

Cabinet

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday, 13th February, 2014.

Present: Cllr Robert Cook, Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr David Harrington, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr David Rose and Cllr Michael Smith.

Officers: N Schneider (CE); J Danks, B Brown, L King (R); P Dobson, R Poundford, J Nixon, I Robinson (DNS); J Humphreys, R Kench(CESC); S Bowman (PH), D E Bond, M Waggott, G Birtle, P K Bell (LD).

Also in attendance: Cllr Maurice Perry (Chair of Regeneration and Transport Select Committee), Councillor Nigel Cooke (Chair of Environment Safety Select Committee), Mark Kirkham (Mazars LLP), Members of the Public.

Apologies: Cllr David Coleman.

CAB 122/13

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Nelson declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 5 – Scrutiny Review of Housing Providers as he was a member of the Tristar Board.

Councillor Smith declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 9 – Economic Climate Update Report as the company that he worked for was named within the report.

All Members present declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 15 – Commemoration of Individuals and Councillors in relation to the Council's functions regarding honours given to Members.

CAB 123/13

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th January 2014 were signed by the Chair as a correct record.

CAB 124/13

Annual Audit Letter

Members were reminded that in 2012 the Audit Commission appointed new external auditors to the Council and that from 1st September 2012 the Council's external audit service had been provided by Mazars LLP.

A formal stage in the annual audit process was the production of the "Annual Audit Letter". The Annual Audit Letter for 2012/13 had been received and was attached to the report.

The Annual Audit Letter summarised the auditor's findings from the 2012/13 audit. In line with previous practice, a copy of the Annual Audit Letter had been sent to all Members of the Council. Mazars LLP were required to submit the Annual Audit Letter to the Audit Commission and it would appear on the Commission's website in due course.

Mazars LLP had issued an unqualified audit opinion on the Council's financial statements for 2012/13 and no material amendments were required. Mazars LLP had issued an unqualified value for money conclusion stating that it was satisfied that "the Council continues to demonstrate proper arrangements for

challenging how it secures economy, efficiency and effectiveness.”

The report went on to say that “the Council’s finance function is well-qualified, informed and capable and the overall finance governance culture is strong.”

RESOLVED that the contents of the Annual Audit Letter 2012/13 be noted.

**CAB
125/13** **Scrutiny Review of Housing Providers**

Consideration was given to a report that presented the Environment Select Committee findings following the Scrutiny Review of the Performance of Housing Providers.

The main issues and overall aim of the review was to determine the performance of Registered Providers (Erimus Housing and Tristar Homes Limited) following the 2007 and 2010 housing stock transfers specifically in relation to ‘promises’ made to tenants in the Council’s pre-ballot Offer Documents. Examples of ‘promises’ included: repairing and improving homes, rent guarantees, housing management service improvements, enhanced tenant and resident involvement opportunities, and broader regeneration. The Committee also considered the impact of the current economic climate on the ‘promises’ made to tenants.

RESOLVED that:-

1. Further monitoring of the promises be undertaken by the Committee and senior officers of Tristar Homes provide regular updates of progress against the promises.
2. Work be undertaken to improve the communication arrangements between Councillors and all social housing providers.

**CAB
126/13** **Scrutiny Review of Demographic Information**

Consideration was given to a report that presented the Regeneration and Transport Select Committee findings following the Scrutiny Review of Use of Demographic Information.

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

RESOLVED 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.

CAB 127/13 LA nominations

In accordance with the procedure for the appointment of school/academy governors, approved as Minute CAB 27/13 of the Cabinet (13 June 2013), Cabinet was invited to consider the nominations to school / academy Governing Bodies listed in the Appendix to the report.

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

Fairfield Primary School - Councillor Maurice Perry
 Holy Trinity Rosehill CE VA Primary School - Mr J Britton
 Oakdene Primary School - Councillor Barry Woodhouse
 Pentland Primary School - Mr N Guy
 St. Mary's CE Primary School - Mr K Hissitt
 Wolviston Primary School - Glynis Thirlaway

CAB 128/13 Youth Offending Service Inspection

Consideration was given to a report on the outcome of a 'Short Quality Screening' (SQS) inspection of Stockton Youth Offending Service (YOS) by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation.

HMIP carried out an SQS of Stockton YOS during the period 25 - 27 November 2013 and published their report on 18 December 2013. The scoring descriptors used by HMIP for Full Joint Inspections were as follows:-

Case Assessment Scores	Descriptor	Stars	
80%	Good	4	
65-79%		Satisfactory	3
50-64%		Unsatisfactory	2
less than 50%		Poor	

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Although not directly applied to the SQS process, these ratings provided an

understanding of the expected range of scores. A report to the YOS Management Board on 14 January 2014 detailing the outcome of this inspection was attached to the report.

During the inspection, case files were examined and YOS Officers were interviewed. The focus of inspection was on community and custodial court orders imposed from March – September 2013.

The YOS had received very good feedback on its performance. The summary of the report stated:-

“Overall, we found a really positive picture in Stockton-on-Tees. The YOS can be proud of the progress made since our last inspection in 2010. Staff delivered high quality reports and assessments of reoffending, harm and vulnerability. They were well supported by their management team through robust quality assurance procedures. There is scope for further improvement by ensuring that reviews are timely and completed in response to significant changes in the circumstances of children and young people”

This was an excellent outcome for the partnership in Stockton on Tees.

Key Strengths identified by inspectors:-

- Excellent engagement with children and young people and their parents / carers in carrying out initial assessments and intervention plans
- The identification of diversity issues and what needed to be done to overcome barriers to change
- High quality assessments of the likelihood of reoffending, risk of harm and vulnerability both at report and initial assessment stage

There was one recommendation for improvement:-

- In all cases, reviews of assessments and plans to tackle the risk of harm to others and vulnerability should be timely and completed quickly in the event of a significant change in circumstances

By the time of inspection, the YOS had already implemented activity to achieve more timely review of cases, as this was an area the YOS already knew that they needed to improve on.

The scoring in this area (85% and 80% respectively, as outlined in Appendix B of the report) evidenced that the improvement activity was already having an impact, as measured against the findings of their own case file audits earlier in 2013. Therefore, given the relatively high level of performance in this area, it was proposed that the Board allowed for the existing improvement activity to become embedded within the service.

This specific area would be monitored by managers for the next 3 months during the regular case file audit process and through staff supervision and report on results at the next Management Board meeting.

Detailed scoring for the YOS was attached to the report.

The chart showed an overall average score of 91% for Stockton on Tees, with scores ranging from 80% to 100%, broken down into the following themes:

- Reducing the likelihood of Reoffending – average of 91%
- Protecting the Public – 91%
- Protecting the Child or Young Person – 87%
- Ensuring that Sentence is Served – 96%

These were very high scores and compare very favourably to other SQS reports.

Members noted the excellent feedback from HMIP about the performance of Stockton YOS.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**CAB
129/13** **Economic Climate Update Report**

Consideration was given to an update report on the Economic Climate. The report provided Members with an overview of the economic climate, outlining the effects that this was having on Stockton Borough, and the mitigations already in place and those being developed in response to this.

A report was submitted to Cabinet in December 2008, which set the scene of the economic downturn, and the effects that the global recession and economic climate were having on businesses, rising unemployment, and mortgage repossessions.

The monthly update report would enable a focussed account to be made of any recent changes to economic circumstances (both positive and negative), the direct impact that this may be having on the Borough, and the responses and mitigations either in place or being developed to support businesses and residents. Attached to the report was a summary of those changes and responses.

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

**CAB
130/13** **Town Centre Progress Update**

Consideration was given to a report on the progress of regeneration, economic development and infrastructure projects across the Borough's town centres. The report contained details of infrastructure works on Stockton High Street, progress on initiatives to support retail and business growth, enhancements to Stockton's market offer, economic development projects and business support along with details of works in Yarm, Norton, Billingham and Thornaby, town centres.

RESOLVED that:-

1. Progress on infrastructure and economic development projects across town centres be noted.
2. The production of the Town Centre Prospectus be noted and to its use in public be agreed.
3. The request for £530,000 to progress projects set out in paragraphs 42-45 be noted and the requested funding be considered as part of the MTFP process.

CAB **Housing Led Regeneration Scheme Updates**
131/13

Consideration was given to a report that gave a position statement in relation to the following Council's major 'housing lead' regeneration schemes:-

Mandale Park
Meadow Rise (Hardwick)
Nursery Gardens (previously known as Parkfield and Mill Lane phase 1)
West End Gardens (new 'scheme name' for the new build site previously known as Parkfield and Mill Land phase 2)
Swainby Road
Victoria Estate

The report summarised how each contributed to the Borough's broader regeneration ambitions in creating vibrant / sustainable communities and town centres.

The report outlined that the housing market had been turbulent over recent years and this had had a dramatic impact on many housing regeneration schemes (both regionally and nationally). The report highlighted that the value of brownfield development land had fallen significantly and this had come at a time when the 'traditional' means of securing external funding had ceased. Without these funding opportunities brownfield sites were becoming increasingly difficult to deliver on the grounds of financial viability. In the absence of no alternative funding opportunities, Members were asked to agree the use of £1.6m of VAT Shelter monies to ensure the continued delivery / momentum of the Councils housing regeneration priorities. Thereby enabling each scheme to support the Councils broader regeneration ambitions via the improvement of physical environment neighbourhoods, securing significant levels of inward investment and through the provision of training and employment opportunities.

Also, referenced within the report work had been done to ensure that the affordable housing provided on each site directly addresses housing need. In Mandale and Hardwick this had been achieved by partners securing revised planning approvals for 2-bed rather than 3-bed houses in the later phases of development. Whilst at West End Gardens, Swainby Road and Victoria this would be incorporated from the outset of the scheme.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The positive progress currently being made on each scheme be noted.
2. In these challenging economic times it be acknowledged that the value of 'brownfield development land' had fallen significantly since the original Swainby Road and Victoria Estate financial appraisals were undertaken. This has occurred at the same time that access to external funding to support such regeneration schemes had ceased.
3. The revised financial position as detailed in paragraphs 27 – 29 of the report (an anticipated funding gap of £1.6m) be noted.
4. In the absence of any external funding the re-profiling / use of previously negotiated VAT shelter monies be approved to ensure the continued momentum on all of the Boroughs priority regeneration schemes.

CAB **Preston Hall Update Report**
132/13

Consideration was given to a report on the first years' activities of Preston Hall Museum since the completion of the refurbishment and its re-opening in Summer 2012.

The last Cabinet Report (CMT February 2012) reported on ongoing progress in preparation for the reopening of Preston Park Museum in Summer 2012. The works had transformed the way people experience the building, they created a clear link from the main entrance to the Victorian Street, reveal the function of the Hall as the home of the Ropners, and created a bigger shop space. Offices previously at the centre of the Hall had been moved into less accessible spaces at the end of the Victorian Street, and the vacated rooms were now used for temporary exhibitions. A new lift had improved disabled access to the first floor. The changes had also separated the Billiard Room and Music Room from the entrance area to create a function suite capable of hosting a range of hires and events.

These major works had not been limited to the Hall. The Kitchen Gardens had been recreated, and the orchard replanted, new stores and crafts workshops had replaced the crude tin sheds that were a legacy of use of parts of the park as a tree nursery and depot.

Work had also been carried out to the Park, improving traffic flows, visitor facilities and beginning the reinstatement of the historic landscape setting of the Hall. Play facilities had been improved and modest works have been undertaken to café and toilets. Footpaths, cycle ways and interpretation had strengthened connections to the wider Tees Heritage Park and long distance trails. A new jetty had improved access to the river and created opportunities for river based transport links and activities.

A full list of the key elements of the three development phases was attached to the report.

The report was not an analysis of the financial profile of the museum. Detailed analysis would be possible at the end of the financial year. However, projected income figures were included in relevant sections to illustrate the relative scale of growth in income generated activities.

RESOLVED that the success of the Museum Project in re-establishing itself as a popular visitor attraction be noted.

CAB **Minutes of Various Bodies**
133/13

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:-

Local Safeguarding Children Board – 19th September 2013
Local Safeguarding Children Board – 4th November 2013
Local Safeguarding Children Board – 21st November 2013
Safer Stockton Partnership – 5th November 2013
Safer Stockton Partnership – 10th December 2013
The Housing and Neighbourhood Partnership – 3rd December 2013
The Western Area Partnership Board – 25th November 2013
The Eastern Area Partnership Board – 29th October 2013
The Central Locality Forum – 31st October 2013
Tees Valley Unlimited Leadership Board – 16th December 2013

CAB **Great War Centenary 2014**
134/13

Consideration was given to a report that provided a summary of the confirmed and planned events scheduled to take place that contribute to the Government's UK wide campaign to encourage local responses to the Great War Centenary during 2014 (GWC 2014).

The 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War was on 4 August 2014. A number of countries were making preparations to mark the centenary. Each nation would create a unique focus on its contribution to, and the impact and legacy of the Great War.

CMT agreed to set up a GWC 2014 Working Group, (which consisted of the Head of Democratic Services, the Libraries and Heritage Services Manager, and the Heritage Officer) to monitor and co-ordinate the current and future projects and initiatives to maximise participation and avoid duplication.

The report provided an update on progress that had been made and the current focus of the GWC 2014 Working Group.

Culture and Leisure Services were in the process of developing and preparing several local projects which were outlined in the original report. An update on the following projects was detailed within the report:-

Harvest Home
'World War I: Stockton and the wider war' Exhibition
Young Roots Heritage Lottery Bid
Heritage Website
Armed Forces Week
Remembrance Day (Sunday 9 November 2014)
Community Participation
Commemoration of those awarded the Victoria Cross
Regional World War One Commemoration Group
Arts Council Strategic Fund Bid
Digital Tapestry
War Graves Plaques
Sunflower Project

The initiatives outlined above were the known responses to the GWC 2014 campaign. In addition, interest was beginning to grow amongst members of the public, community groups, Parish Councils etc., wishing to support / develop activities of commemoration within the Borough. Some of these activities may require support / assistance from the Council to assist their delivery, and the Council's Events Programme Group would consider such requests and make recommendations to the Events Board as to which be supported and what the Council could offer each activity.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The report outlining the Council's response to GWC 2014, and the other events and activities being planned and organised within the Borough by members of the public, community/voluntary groups, and Parish Councils etc be noted.
2. The Government's plans for commemoration of those awarded the Victoria Cross as part of a national initiative to commemorate the Great War Centenary during 2014 be noted.
3. The consultation held regarding the location for a commemorative paving stone in honour of Sergeant Edward 'Ned' Cooper, the Borough's only WW1 recipient of the Victoria Cross be noted, and the siting of the paving stone in an appropriate location within Stockton Town Centre be approved.

CAB 135/13 Commemoration of Individuals and Councillors

Consideration was given to a report on the commemoration procedure and the proposed amendment to that procedure to include the posthumous commemoration of Councillors' contribution to the Borough.

The Commemorative Working Group was formed by the Executive Scrutiny

Committee in 2008, this forum was established to commemorate the actions of individuals that were either born, lived or worked within the borough and had excelled either locally, nationally or internationally in some way, bringing recognition to both themselves and the borough as a whole.

Supported by the Council's Leisure & Culture Services, who were responsible for the Council's Heritage Strategy, and by Democratic Services, the Group had considered nominations received from the public / elected members to commemorate individuals who, through their actions, had brought recognition to the Borough.

With no available budget as such, commemoration of individuals such as George Stephenson, John Walker, and Dr McGonigle had been achieved through the creation of an on-line Hall of Fame hosted within the Council's website.

The Group allowed Members to decide who / what should or shouldn't be commemorated, using the criteria appended to this report and supported by evidence from the nominator, plus key officers of the Council.

Feedback would suggest that this approach was working and should continue for individuals, however requests had been received over the last few years for the Council to also posthumously commemorate Councillors. Therefore, it was felt necessary and appropriate to formalise the consideration and approval of such requests. The report proposed that following an appropriate period of reflection, consideration of such requests was included in the work of this Working Group. It was suggested that an appropriate length of reflection would be 4 years, signifying the continuing impact of an individual's contributions across two successive councils.

The criteria used by the Commemorative Working Group determined the significance of an individual's contribution using two criteria and this it was felt would be suitable for the purposes of considering the commemoration of Councillors. The criteria were as follows:-

- (1) Level of importance – their impact or their achievements, and their consequent eminence, being judged locally, regionally, nationally or internationally.
- (2) Relevance to the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees – What is their connection to the Borough?
 - (a) Born or died here only; lived here for a short while, or tenuous Association with the place.
 - (b) Not born here, did not live here, but the work/event for which they are known took place here.
 - (c) Born and/or lived here but the work for which they are known took place elsewhere.
 - (d) Born and/or lived here and the work for which they are known took place here.

(3) The above categories are listed in order of importance with (a) scoring the lowest and (d) justifying the greatest commemoration. Please refer to Appendix 1 which illustrates the scoring model.

The procedure for considering individuals involved reports being presented to the Group which included the detail of the original request in addition to an objective analysis provided by Stockton Borough Council's Officers.

The Group periodically judged nominations, giving consideration to the level of Importance, relevance to Stockton-on-Tees and the appropriate level of Commemoration.

In terms of the procedure / report to the Group, it was proposed that in the case of Councillors, the report should include an objective analysis, and suggested commemorative options provided by the Relevant Corporate Director/Head of Service for the Group to consider.

With regard to consultation the Members Advisory Panel, at its meeting held on 25th September 2013, endorsed the proposal outlined from paragraphs 5-9 and requested that the matter be referred on to the Commemoration Working Group in order that their views may be obtained, prior to consideration by Cabinet and ultimately Council for approval.

The Commemoration Working Group, at its meeting held on 24th January 2014, also approved the proposed procedure.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The consultation undertaken with both the Commemoration Working Group and the Members Advisory Panel regards the proposed amendment to the commemoration procedure to include the posthumous commemoration of Councillors' contribution to the Borough be noted.

RECOMMENDED to Council that:-

2. The proposed procedure for posthumously commemorating Councillors, as outlined at paragraphs 5-9, be approved.

**CAB Council Plan 2014-17
136/13**

Consideration was given to a report that presented a draft Council Plan for 2014 - 17 in line with the framework agreed by Cabinet in November 2013, prior to it being submitted for Full Council approval. A copy of the Council Plan 2014 – 17 was attached to the report.

At the Cabinet meeting of 27th November, 2013 Members received information about the context and proposals for developing the Council Plan for 2014 - 2017 and approved the framework.

The Council Plan was last fully reviewed in 2010 and covered the period 2010 - 2013. Subsequent years had seen the plan reviewed based on an analysis of key policy and legislative changes during the preceding year and known forthcoming changes. Since the production of the last Council Plan, the context in which the Council operated had changed significantly in relation to policy, central government relationships and not least the financial climate. The period for the next Council Plan was likely to see further changes in the financial settlement and the impact of the reductions to meet the financial gap would continue to have an impact. The plan had been developed in this context and giving due consideration to the content of the Medium Term Financial Plan.

The context outlined in the following paragraphs provided the basis on which the Council Plan had been reviewed.

As the Council had sought to address the impact of national policies and legislative changes and the changing circumstances in which it delivered its services on the people it sought to serve, a number of local policy principles had been agreed through, for example, approval of the Medium Term Financial Plan, recommendations from Efficiency, Transformation and Improvement Reviews, reports to Cabinet and these had been taken into account in the draft plan.

- Promoting equality of opportunity (focussing in particular on targeted intervention)
- Protecting the vulnerable (focusing on intervention and activity aimed at protecting the vulnerable and being clear about what we mean by vulnerable)
- Developing strong and healthy communities (capturing preventative and universal activity)
- Creating economic prosperity (universal activity) in line with our ambition for economic recovery and growth

There had been significant resource invested in the development of the Council branding which was embedded within all of the corporate communications, links clearly with the thematic areas within the Council Plan, Cabinet Member portfolios, Scrutiny Committee themes and had served the Council well in terms of resident communication and partner engagement. The draft of the Council Plan 2014 - 17 did not seek to change or detract from these but to add clarity and focus.

The draft Council Plan retained the ambition the Council had for its residents, businesses and visitor over the medium to long term and provided a framework to support decision-making, resource allocation and as a platform on which to secure external funding. Ambition and vision which had historically resulted in inward external investment, positive inspection outcomes, high levels of resident and business satisfaction and provided strong strategic and community leadership. The draft plan provided an opportunity to restate commitment to the medium - long term ambitions and aspirations, whilst providing a framework to support decision-making, resource allocation, secure external funding and give a clear focus on the shorter term actions.

Since the last Council Plan and during the duration of the next Council Plan significant capacity had been taken out of the organisation and through the implementation of the agreed reviews would continue to do so. The Council

Plan 2014 - 17 took both of these factors into account in being realistic and clear about what could be achieved over the duration of the plan.

It was recognised that this was a medium - term plan; in line with the financial planning framework and that circumstances were likely to further change over its duration. Therefore whilst the plan covered the period 2014 - 17 it would be subject to an annual refresh to take account of any changes in policy, legislation or financial circumstances.

It was not the intention of the plan to capture the totality of the Council's business but rather provide a focus on key strategic priorities and activities and provide the framework for reporting to CMT, Cabinet, Executive Scrutiny and Council. The day – to - day business of the Council would continue to feature in the Business Plans within individual Service Groupings.

Whilst it was acknowledged that much of the success of the Council was through its work in partnership with others there was a need, in terms of accountability and transparency, to be clearer about what the Council's plans and priorities were, how it was going to deliver them and how it would know it was doing when set against the context of reducing budgets, growing demographics and increased demand for services.

The Council Plan 2014/17 was in 2 parts. The "front end" set out the Council's overall ambition as detailed below and provided the context in which the Council delivered its services. This was supported by narrative providing information about changing demographics, details of national policy and legislation that had informed the plan, the links to other key strategic plans and strategies and details of the 4 under pinning policy principles referenced at paragraph 4.

"Big Plans, Bright Future

Our ambition is to create a Borough that is more confident, more vibrant and more successful than ever before. A place where people prosper and grow, where people feel happy, safe and healthy. A place where people can see that our drive, our integrity and our imagination have delivered a genuine improvement and exceptional value for money. A place that every single one of us is proud of"

The second part provided the detailed activity to be undertaken under each of the themes and policy principles. The final version of the plan would include a range of targets on which progress could be monitored and success measured. Officers were developing these targets and Cabinet was requested to delegate the decision on approval of the targets to the Corporate Director for Resources in conjunction with the Leader of the Council.

Briefing sessions had been organised for the 12th and 13th February 2014, for Members to discuss the Council Plan 2014/17 alongside the Medium Term Financial Plan arrangements. Work was also underway to develop an internal performance management database which would provide the opportunity to 'tag' the various elements of the plan to support multi-faceted reporting, for example, by theme and / or by policy principle.

RECOMMENDED to Council that:-

- 1. The Council Plan 2014 – 2017 be approved.**
- 2. Authority for the agreement of the targets associated with the delivery of the Council Plan be delegated to the Corporate Director for Resources in conjunction with the Leader of the Council.**