

Cabinet

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

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

Officers: J Danks, L King, D Hurwood, E Hall (R); P Dobson, R Poundford, J Nixon (DNS); J Humphreys, L Brown (CESC); P Kelly (PH), D E Bond, P K Bell (LD).

Also in attendance: Cllr Kevin Faulks, Members of the Public.

Apologies: Cllr David Harrington and Cllr David Rose.

CAB Declarations of Interest

139/13

Councillor Mrs McCoy declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 4 – Welfare Reform including Update on DHP and LCTSS as she was the Chair SDAIS.

Councillor Coleman declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 4 – Welfare Reform including Update on DHP and LCTSS as he was on the board of SDAIS.

Each of the members present declared a personal interest in respect of agenda item 12 – Members Allowances as they were recipients of / entitled to receive such allowances.

CAB Minutes

140/13

The minutes of the meetings held on 13th February 2014 and 20th February 2014 were confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

CAB Welfare Reform - Transforming Debt Recovery

141/13

Consideration was given to a report that described changes to legislation governing enforcement agent activities, which would take effect from April 2014. The changes would impact on enforcement action for non-payment of Council Tax, Business Rates and parking / bus lane offence fines; and the new fee structures would impact on debtors. In the light of these changes and their potential implications, a piece of work had been carried out to investigate the practicalities, risks and business case for creating an internal enforcement service. This had concluded that an in-house enforcement service would bring a number of benefits that were described in the report, primarily enabling a holistic approach to debt recovery, and an appropriate level of support for vulnerable residents and those facing the impact of welfare reform.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The new legislation and its implications be noted.
2. The benefits of adopting a holistic approach to debt recovery highlighted in the report be noted and the creation of an internal enforcement service be

approved, with a target live date of September 2014. Initially this would be for the collection of council tax, business rates and unpaid parking fines and bus lane offences, then rolling out to include commercial rents and any other debts outstanding to the Council that are enforceable under the new legislation.

3. The new service operates alongside a “scaled down” external enforcement agent service to cover the transition period, out of area cases, cases where specialist removal of goods is necessary and to complete collections on cases that had already been referred for action.

4. As the service develops, further work be undertaken to explore the option of developing a reciprocal arrangement with other Councils’ in-house enforcement services in the region, to assist with business continuity and to look at collecting respective debts.

5. An allocation of £83,500 from the transformation fund be approved to support the start-up costs of the new service.

CAB 142/13 Welfare Reform including update on DHP and LCTSS

Consideration was given to a report that presented an update on quarter 3 monitoring of the outcomes / impact of Welfare Reform including emerging issues.

Previous reports had detailed the introduction of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 which set out Government’s intention to reform the benefits & tax credits system to provide greater incentives to work. The report provided details of the third quarters monitoring using the framework agreed by Members in July 2013.

Welfare Reform meant several changes to benefits, the introduction of which was staggered across different geographical areas over a period of time. Reforms already introduced include Personal Independence Payment (PIP) replacing Disability Living Allowance (DLA), removal of the spare room subsidy, transfer of responsibility for elements of the Social Fund to Local Authorities, Local Council Tax Support Scheme and the introduction of the Benefit Cap. Universal Credit appeared however to be delayed and despite assurances from government that the programme was still scheduled to be fully rolled out by 2017. No information had yet been seen on local roll out.

The report updated Members on the following areas:-

Parliamentary Select Committee on Welfare Reform
Staffing and Housing Benefit Administrative Grant / Discretionary Housing Payments
Distribution of government contribution and upper limit for 2014/15
Single Fraud Investigation Service (SFIS)
Under-Occupation
Impact of Welfare Reform on social housing
New measures to restrict migrants’ access to benefits
Council Tax Collection Performance
Social Fund / Back on Track
Benefit Cap

Welfare Reform Data Set

A full copy of the data set was attached to the report.

The data collated provided a useful benchmark to monitor changes and impact; however this was just one level of intelligence needed to inform understanding of the overall impact of the Welfare Reform legislation. Other detail contained in the report alongside anecdotal evidence and case studies identify that there were a complex set of circumstances that surrounded many aspects of welfare reform, with changes to one aspect impacting on other areas, some with an immediate impact, others taking longer to understand the impact. Due to individual circumstances, Impact leads individuals to react in different ways; this was difficult to track through a series of measures. Triangulation of intelligence surrounding welfare reform continued through the numerous working groups in operation both within the council and with partners. A review of this data set would take place post year end collection to determine usefulness and appropriateness given the changing circumstance going forward.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The contents of the report be noted;
2. The quarter 3 performance monitoring outcomes and observations be noted;
3. The update on spend against the DHP pot and emerging issues as a result of the 96 ruling be noted.

CAB 143/13 Recording and Web Broadcasting of Council Meetings

Consideration was given to a report on recording and web broadcasting of Council Meetings.

Cabinet requested the Members Advisory Panel (MAP) to consider issues relating to the possible recording and web broadcasting of Council meetings, and to report findings back to a future Cabinet Meeting.

The issue of recording and web broadcasting of Council meetings had been utilised in some councils as a means of enabling access to Council business and encouraging take up of becoming a local Councillor.

There were many (and some sensitive) issues to consider, including cost, demand, personal feelings and views of members and report back to a future meeting of Cabinet.

The Government was also consulting on the prospect of making such arrangements a statutory requirement. MAP could also consider this as part of their work.

RESOLVED that MAP consider the possibility of recording and web

broadcasting of Council meetings and report back to a future meeting of Cabinet.

CAB 144/13 LA Nominations for Cabinet on 13th March 2014

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 is invited to consider the nominations to school / academy Governing Bodies listed in the Appendix to this report.

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

Egglescliffe School:-
Mr D Brown
Mrs C Brooks

Myton Park Primary School:-
Mrs S Dale

CAB 145/13 PROCEDURE FOR ADMISSION OF PUPILS TO PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SEPTEMBER 2015

Consideration was given to a report that outlined the admission arrangements the Local Authority (LA) was proposing for primary and secondary schools in September 2015. In order to comply with legislation for admissions in 2015, the report included the full Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements and Admission numbers for Primary and Secondary Schools for that year.

The new Admissions Code underpinned the Government's aim to create a schools system shaped by parents which delivered excellence and equity, developing the talents and potential of every child, regardless of their background; a system where all parents feel they had the same opportunities to apply for the school they want.

Within Stockton-On-Tees the aim was to ensure that the admission arrangements were in line with the principle of fair access to educational opportunity. The LA's policies, procedures and the additional information published in the Primary and Secondary Admissions Booklet 2015 for parents supported this.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The proposed changes to criteria 3 and 6 of the Admission Policy for September 2015 (paragraph 1 and Appendix 1 of the report) be agreed.
2. The Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for Primary, Secondary, Voluntary Aided (VA) schools, Academies and the proposed Free School (paragraph 2 and Appendix 2) be agreed.
3. Admission numbers for September 2015 (paragraph 3 and Appendix 3)

be agreed.

4. The Approach to rural community admission zone anomalies (paragraph 4) be noted.
5. The South of the borough implications for zoning (paragraph 5) be noted.
6. The information and current position in relation to Ingleby Manor Free School (paragraph 6) be noted.

CAB 146/13 Children's Social Care Activity & Performance Report

Consideration was given to a report on Children's Social Care Activity and Performance.

In light of the Ofsted inspection of child protection in January 2013, it had been decided to review the content and format of future children's social care reports to Cabinet.

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

As a way of achieving this, the use of a 'process model' was approved by Cabinet on 13 June 2013.

Given the importance and profile of these issues it had been agreed that the new activity and performance reports be brought to Cabinet on a bimonthly basis i.e. every alternate Cabinet.

This report was based on the available data at the end of quarter 3 (31 December 2013).

This revised format for reporting to Cabinet attempted to show the range of key factors that impacted on the levels of activity, workload pressures and performance in children's social care.

The template data that was attached to the report was designed to illustrate the following key elements:

- Inputs

These measures record the flow of business into the social care system, the level / complexity of activity and the extent to which other agencies were impacting on this activity. The key measures were as follows:-

- Number of contacts made with children's social care
- Number of contacts that become referrals for assessment
- Number of referrals by agency/number that do not meet social care threshold
- Referral reasons e.g. domestic violence, substance misuse
- Number of Common Assessment Framework (CAF) 2s by agency

- Number/proportion of contacts with an active CAF
- Number/proportion of contacts which are closed and logged
- Number/proportion of referrals resulting in no further action (NFA)

- Processes

These measures related to the efficiency and effectiveness of services in managing the business i.e. the way in which business was conducted to assess needs, make decisions about support required and keep cases under review. The key measures were as follows:-

- Number and timeliness of assessments
- Number and proportion of referrals that result in Section 47 (Child Protection) enquiries
- Number and timeliness of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs)
- Timeliness of Child Protection (CP) CP Reviews
- Attendance of children and young people at ICPCs and CP Reviews
- Attendance of children and young people at Looked After Children (LAC) Reviews
- Number/proportion of Care Applications to Court
- Number/proportion of LAC on Section 20 (voluntary accommodation) or Legal Orders
- Workforce composition

- Outputs

These indicators were proxies for how effective processes had been in delivering results, which in turn should lead to positive outcomes for the children and young people concerned. The key measures were as follows:-

- Numbers of children in need (CiN)/CP/LAC
- Re-referral rates
- Second or subsequent CP Plans
- CP plans 2 years+
- Number/proportion of those stepping down from CP Plan to CAF
- LAC Placement stability (number of placement moves both short and long term)
- Care leavers in Education Employment and Training (EET)
- Care leavers in suitable accommodation
- Numbers/proportion of children adopted or made subject to Special Guardianship Order (SGO)/Residence Order or returned home

Appendix 1 to the report gave a summary of the available data at the end of quarter 3 (31 December 2013), along with a brief commentary highlighting the main issues raised from analysis of the information.

Appendix 2 to the report gave the data which informed the report.

In summary, the overall picture reflected in the attached analysis was as follows:-

- Inputs – a continuing high level of demand on services, but with some levelling off in volume of contacts and referrals compared to the previous year.
- Processes - continuing pressures on timeliness of assessment and child protection processes, with an adverse impact on performance levels.
- Outputs - overall sound results, suggesting that, despite high caseloads,

support provided for children requiring social care intervention continues to be largely effective, although there are some challenges for care leavers.

Performance continued to be monitored very closely via the monthly Children's Social Care Performance Clinic chaired by the Corporate Director and attended by the Head of Service and all senior managers with responsibility for children's social care. This meeting analyses a range of performance and activity data and agrees and monitors actions in response to any identified issues. This was underpinned by a range of performance clinics with operational managers across the service.

In addition there was a fortnightly Workload Pressures meeting chaired by the Corporate Director and attended by the Head of Service and key senior managers in children's social care. This meeting closely monitors staffing and allocation issues and any associated pressures across the service.

Due to continuing concerns about inappropriate referrals to children's social care and the low take up of the common assessment framework (CAF) by partner agencies, a revised referral protocol was approved by Stockton-on-Tees Local Safeguarding Children Board (SLSCB). Under this protocol, no referrals were accepted by children's social care without prior evidence of CAF activity, unless there were immediate child protection concerns. This was implemented on 4 November 2013.

An update report was taken to SLSCB on 16 January 2014 based on the position at 20 December 2013. Up to this date, 24 referrals were returned to partner agencies as inappropriate.

These could be broken down as follows:-

Police	17
Housing	2
NTHFT	2
Schools	2
Probation	1

Due to the high number of inappropriate referrals from the police, discussions had taken place on a Tees wide basis and it had been agreed to develop a consistent pathway for police to raise issues which did not meet the threshold for children's social care intervention.

The 'critical friend' review of decision making and processes in relation to the child protection system was undertaken by colleagues from Northumberland Council from 21 to 23 January 2014. The findings from this review aimed to provide an objective evaluation of some key lines of enquiry identified by CESC Senior Management Team. Some of the key findings were:-

- A committed and motivated workforce who understood their role and function.
- Staff spoke highly of Stockton.
- Staff spoke of very good management support and a discernible

improvement in this area over the last 12 months

- Duty workers indicated their workloads are manageable.
- Staff interviewed indicated a willingness to improve practice and appeared to exhibit a good level self-awareness.

The review made a number of recommendations to CESC and LSCB following their review which included:-

1. identifying and developing a risk assessment model and framework
2. developing the role of the reviewing service
3. reviewing how CP meetings are undertaken and who attends them
4. reviewing some of the documentation currently used by CESC and partners at CP meetings

The report had been to the LSCB and an action plan was being developed.

As indicated previously, a peer review of safeguarding would take place in the week commencing 24 March 2014. This three day diagnostic would be undertaken by a team of experienced peer reviewers from other Local Authorities and would be focused on social work practice and decision making in the newly formed Assessment Teams and longer term intervention in cases involving domestic violence and neglect. This would enable the Council to test out the impact and progress of actions implemented in response to the Ofsted inspection of child protection in January 2013.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The continued workload pressures and associated activity in the children's social care system and the consequent impact this is having on both performance and budget be noted.
2. Further update reports be received on a bi monthly basis in order to continue to monitor children's social care activity and performance.

**CAB
147/13 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 be noted and the work undertaken to date be supported.

CAB
148/13 **Street Lighting - Invest to Save Update**

Consideration was given to a report that gave an update on Street Lighting Invest to Save.

The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) reflected a significant reduction in Government Funding over recent years, and provided the Council with a significant financial challenge. In order to tackle this challenge there were three big ticket items to consider where reductions can be made, one of which was Waste and Energy. As part of this process in October 2013 Cabinet approved the principle of invest to save in the Councils street lighting stock by way of the option which replaced all existing lanterns with Light Emitting Diodes (LED) and replacement of all columns over 25 years old.

In addition this project would assist in contributing towards one of the key ambitions in the Environment and Housing theme of tackling climate change and assisting the Council in reaching the commitment to achieve a 21% reduction in carbon emissions by 2020. LED lighting contained no toxic materials and was 100% recyclable, and could potentially assist in reducing the carbon footprint by up to one third. Also the long operational life time span means LED can save material thus helping towards a 'greener' future.

A pragmatic assessment demonstrated that the age of the existing columns within each Ward should be the primary factor in formulating the work programme, in particular those with the greatest percentage over 40 years old. This would ensure the Wards with the oldest and most rapidly deteriorating columns being targeted for both column and lantern replacement first. A detailed list of the programme was attached to the report.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The outcome of the independent due diligence appraisal report undertaken, which supports the investment strategy to ascertain both the energy and maintenance savings be noted.
2. The work programme which sets out on a ward by ward basis how the project will be delivered over the three year installation phase be approved.
3. The procurement processes being undertaken in respect of the lanterns, columns and design facility be noted.

CAB **Members Allowances**
149/13

Consideration was given to a report that provided details of the Independent Remuneration Panel's ("the Panel") recommendations following the decision at Council on 12 June 2013 approving a review of Members' Allowances, in order to target at least 15% (£130K) savings by 2015/16 onwards.

At full Council on 12 June 2013, as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan – Big Ticket Update and Savings proposals report, it was agreed that a review of Members' Allowances should be undertaken to target at least 15% (£130K) savings by 2015/16.

In accordance with this decision, the Authority's Independent Remuneration Panel ("the Panel") undertook a review of Members' Allowances during October and November 2013. The Panel had concluded the review and produced a report. A copy of the Panel's report was attached to the report.

The Members' Advisory Panel ("MAP") considered the Panel's Members' Allowances report at its meeting on 31 January 2014. Details of comments made at the meeting were attached to the report.

Cabinet was asked to consider the report and the proposals for achieving the Council's target of at least 15% (£130K) savings on Members Allowances.

Although not part of the Panel's remit, the Panel's report offered some advice on potential changes to the Authority's governance structure, in order to produce additional savings on Members' Allowances.

Paragraphs 6.2 and 6.3 of the report referred to the "general feeling ... that Cabinet could be reduced by at least two Members..." and "general agreement that the number of select committees should be reduced significantly...."

These suggestions reflected potential savings proposals referred to previously by the Leader of the Council. It was therefore proposed to present a separate report to Cabinet in that respect in due course, so that appropriate recommendations could be made regarding possible changes in 2015/16 onwards.

At the Council meeting on 26 February 2014, as part of the decisions relating to the Council's 2014/2015 budget and Council Tax, it was agreed that Members' Allowances should be frozen for 2014/15. A copy of the proposed Scheme for 2014/15 was attached to the report.

RECOMMENDED to Council that:-

- 1. The Panel's report be noted.**
- 2. The Panel be thanked for its work.**
- 3. The proposals for achieving the Council's target of at least 15% (£130K) savings be considered.**

CAB 150/13 Director of Public Health Annual Report 2012-13

Consideration was given to the Director of Public Health's Annual Report 2012/13.

This was the first report of the Director of Public Health for Stockton Borough Council under the new arrangements introduced in the Health and Social Care Act 2012. The Report outlined the key health and wellbeing challenges and opportunities in Stockton Borough, including the data and evidence and details of work and planned next steps. The Report fits with the priorities in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and outlines some key messages and challenges to partners and communities.

Key areas of work and ongoing challenges were outlined in relation to:-

- Addressing the wider determinants of health e.g. smoking, mental health
- Reducing inequalities e.g. between people with learning disabilities and the rest of the population
- Addressing key health and wellbeing issues e.g. cancer and lung disease
- Healthcare quality and commissioning e.g. through work Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Clinical Commissioning Group
- Protecting the health of the population e.g. management of outbreaks and increasing uptake of screening programmes

The Report also outlined three key challenges for colleagues and communities:-

- No alcohol in pregnancy
- Fizzy drinks full of added sugars should only be a rare treat, especially for children
- Read to your child every day – a great way to bond with your child and help them develop

The Report outlined the significant opportunity presented by the location of the Public Health team within the Local Authority.

RECOMMENDED to Council that the Director of Public Health's Annual Report 2012/13 be noted.