

Cabinet

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday, 9th October, 2014.

Present: Cllr Robert Cook (Chair); Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr David Harrington, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr David Rose and Cllr Michael Smith.

Officers: N Schneider (CE), J Danks, L King, D Welsh (R); P Dobson, R McGuckin, R Poundford, R Kench (DNS); J Humphreys, L Brown, D McConnell, L Hanley, J Parry (CESC); P Kelly (PH) M Waggott, G Birtle, P K Bell (LD).

Also in attendance: Cllr Perry (Chair of Regeneration and Transport Select Committee), Cllr Dennis, Cllr Faulks, Chair and Treasurer of Tees Credit Union, members of the public.

Apologies: Cllr David Coleman and Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy.

CAB 71/14 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Cook declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 4 – Tees Credit Union – Update as he was a member of Tees Credit Union.

Councillor Faulks declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 4 – Tees Credit Union – Update as he was a member of Tees Credit Union.

Councillor Cook declared a personal prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 5 – Scrutiny Review of the Future of Durham Tees Valley Airport as he was a Director of Durham Tees Valley Airport. Councillor Cook withdrew from the Chair and Councillor Beall took the Chair during consideration of the item.

Councillor Cook declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 7 – School Performance 2013/14 as he was a member of Billingham South Primary School and Norton Primary School Governing Bodies.

Councillor Nelson declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 7 – School Performance 2013/14 as he was a member of Frederick Natrass Primary School Governing Body.

Councillor Beall declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 7 – School Performance 2013/14 as he was the Chair of Rosebrook Primary School Governing Body.

Councillor Smith declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 10 – Economic Climate Update as his employer was named in the report.

CAB 72/14 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4th September 2014 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

CAB 73/14 **Tees Credit Union**

Consideration was given to a report that presented an update on the progress

and activity relating to Tees Credit Union in response to a request by Cabinet following the previous report in January 2014. Significant progress had been by Tees Credit Union in relation to strengthening its governance arrangements, the development of a robust business plan, increases in its product range and outreach collection points and a successful bid to Northern Rock Foundation which provides funding to further enhance its continued development.

Tees Credit Union (TCU) was established in 1993 and was originally known as Thornaby Credit Union, offering savings and loans to those who lived or worked in Thornaby. By 2009 it had implemented its plans to expand coverage across the whole Borough encompassing the business of Central Stockton and Stockton North's Credit Unions (the only other registered credit unions in the Borough).

TCU was regulated and controlled by the Financial Conduct Authority with members finances safeguarded through the Financial Services Compensation Scheme up to a limit of £85k.

A credit union was a community-based financial co-operative that provided affordable financial services to its members. The membership was based around a common bond. Since the previous report to Cabinet the board of TCU had received approval to extend its common bond to an area that includes Tees Valley, Durham and North Yorkshire. Whilst TCU had extended their common bond area they remained committed to, and focussed on, serving the needs of the population of the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees, whilst retaining flexibility to respond to requests from individuals in neighbouring areas where credit union provision is lacking.

Since the last report to Cabinet TCU had further developed its governance arrangements with a number of new board members and a new Chair of the Board who all brought additional skills to the existing board in support of its development plan. Attached to the report were the details of TCU board. It had 3 paid employees (The Manager and two administrative support staff) and had increased the number of volunteers and outreach collection points. Attached to the report was see a list of the current collection points.

The TCU Board, supported by a multi-agency change team and an element of funding from the SBC Investment Fund made a successful bid to the Northern Rock Foundation and had secured £150k. The Board had agreed this would be used in relation to supporting its business growth and sustainability through investment in IT, Staffing and premises. This was very much 'work in progress' following the confirmation of the funding being received in June this year. Work to date included:-

- Conducting a feasibility study into merging with a neighbouring credit union which includes development of a refreshed vision and operating model, identification of efficiencies and due diligence. The outcome from this is expected to be presented to TCU Board in November 2014. This model of operation is in line with the recommendations from the Paul Jones (Liverpool University) research into the growth and development of credit unions.
- Interim arrangements are being explored to fast track development using experienced personnel with strategic and business development experience and knowledge.

- A working partnership with a neighbouring credit union based on an allocation of 2 days a week of senior manager time.
- Investing in SMART technologies to enhance access to information and accounts
- Exploring the opportunities for establishing a high street presence
- Implementing a volunteer recruitment drive

As well as making changes to its governance arrangements TCU had improved its product range in response to changing customer need and, in addition to providing the traditional collection points they also offer the following:-

- Access to white goods and furniture for tenants of Thirteen Group properties through a partnership arrangement with Thirteen Group
- Adult savings account
- Christmas savings account
- First savers account
- Quit and save account (smoking cessation and saving service)
- Loyalty loans (with a max. APR of 42.6%, 3% month on the reducing balance)
- Share loan (linked to the balance of an individual's savings)
- Free death benefit scheme
- Payroll deduction scheme (SBC, Catalyst, Thirteen Group, Five Lamps)
- Pre-paid card facility (which doesn't require any credit check, is a safe alternative to a high street bank, can only spend what is loaded on to the card)
- Bill-paying budget account
- Direct debit facility
- Standing order facility
- Family funeral plan
- Money management and budgeting advice

TCU had a target to increase membership in the Borough of Stockton from 1% to 4% of the current population and were averaging 30-40 new members per month. They were just coming to the close of their business year with the 2nd half of their annual performance showing an improvement on the first half. Membership was at 2053 compared with 1704 at the end of September 2013, indicating a 20% improvement.

The national rollout of Universal Credit, scheduled for 2016, was likely to see further opportunity for TCU to expand its customer base.

TCU were seeing a growing need and demand for its services as a result of people experiencing increasing economic hardship and/or looking for alternatives to high cost lending. This aspect had been reflected in the options being presented to Cabinet in relation to the continuation of the 'Back on Track' scheme.

The changes in relation to the Local Strategic Partnership and its focus on tackling family poverty through 'A Brighter Borough for All' with its priorities of ensuring every child had the best start in life and maximising family income, provided an opportunity for Infinity (the borough's financial inclusion forum) and TCU to link in with the locality forum task and finish groups, particularly in relation to any activity associated with maximising family income. This had resulted in a range of activity within the Central, Eastern and Northern Locality

Forum Action Plans to actively promote, support and increase its reach.

Support for TCU from the SBC had been in a range of forms and continued since the previous report to Cabinet. It included:-

- Membership of the TCU Change Team at a senior level (Corporate Director and Head of Service). Following the securing of the Northern Rock funding and the strengthening of the TCU Board the Change Team has ceased meeting on a formal basis.
- 2 Heads of Service with relevant skills and knowledge have been offered and accepted on to the Tees Credit Union Board
- The provision of customer insight data and intelligence to help with marketing and targeting
- The introduction of payroll deduction for staff and members (72 new TCU members have been achieved to date)
- Further promotion of the services and facilities available through TCU to employees and members
- An incentivised pilot scheme linked to the Troubled Families Initiative was put in place to encourage those targeted through the Troubled Families Initiative to improve their financial capability through accessing the services of TCU. To date only 1 of the target beneficiaries has taken up the offer and this is currently being reviewed.
- Facilitating discussions with a range of key stakeholders in relation to securing a High Street presence.
- Consideration of the inclusion of TCU in proposals for a revised 'welfare assistance' scheme following the removal nationally of the funding for the Social Fund, subject to a separate report to Cabinet.
- Providing a range of forums through which TCU can promote its services (e.g., the Stockton Strategic Partnership 'Maximising Income' event and the Locality Forums)
- Provision of information relating to large businesses to target for possible interest in payroll deduction

Since the previous report to Cabinet in January 2014 significant progress had been made by Tees Credit Union in relation to its operating model and plans towards sustainability. They recognised there was further work to do and were taking positive steps to deliver their business plan.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**CAB
74/14 Scrutiny Review of the Future of Durham Tees
Valley Airport**

Consideration was given to a report on the Scrutiny Review of Durham Tees Valley Airport. The Regeneration and Transport Select Committee examined how the proposals within the Master plan for Durham Tees Valley Airport would ensure a viable airport going forward and how future investment would seek to develop the airport related businesses.

Reassurance was sought that all reasonable endeavours had been made to retain a fully serviced airport, including following up all previous interest,

discussions with airlines and development opportunities with other airports.

RESOLVED that:-

1. Peel continue to grow and encourage leisure and holiday flights at the earliest opportunity.
2. Peel further cultivate these services to retain and build upon to ensure a successful business flights base.
3. Peel increase their marketing promotion with/of KLM and Eastern Airways.
4. the Council and Tees Valley Unlimited support any work and lobbying (including to the Airports Commission and Transport Select Committee) that has the potential to result in the reinstatement of a London (flight) link.
5. the Council and Tees Valley Unlimited support any work and lobbying (including to the Airports Commission and Transport Select Committee) to:
 - Introduce differential APD for regional airports such as DTVA
 - Secure route support funding and mandate those airports increasing capacity in London and the South East, to ring-fence a certain proportion of flights to regional airports e.g. DTVA
 - Reduce landing charges at Heathrow for domestic flights.
6. support is sought from appropriate local MPs and MEPs in lobbying for changes covered in the proposals above.
7. all funding secured from any and all Housing & Neighbourhood Development on the airport site(s), is subject to reinvestment under transparent arrangements to deliver the aspirations of the Peel Master Plan and ensure secondary income for the airport.
8. the Councils work closely with TVU and DTVA to find solutions to sub-regional and local public transport connectivity to DTVA and that any initiatives assisting with this be supported.
9. Peel's marketing promotion of their "Aero Centre" proposals (to develop specialist clusters e.g. logistic operations and complementary activities at DTVA) be supported.

**CAB
75/14**

Children's Social Care Activity and Performance

Consideration was given to a report on Children's Social Care and 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 were 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 were brought to Cabinet on a bimonthly basis i.e. every alternate Cabinet.

The report was based on the available data at the end of quarter 1 (30 June 2014).

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. Cabinet receive further update reports on a bi monthly basis in order to continue to monitor children's social care activity and performance.
3. The established mechanisms in place to monitor the safety and wellbeing of children deemed to be at risk of child sexual exploitation be noted.
4. A Children and Young People Select Committee Task and Finish Group review how robust the Council and its Multi-Agency Partners' procedures are with regard to children deemed to be at risk of child sexual exploitation and that the review involves all partner agencies.

**CAB
76/14** **School Performance 2013-14**

Consideration was given to a report that presented a headline, summary analysis of school performance in the academic year 2013 - 2014.

The report detailed the following key areas:-

- Primary Phase – Early Years and Foundation Stage
- Primary Phase – Key Stage 1
- Primary Phase – Key Stage 2
- Secondary Phase – Key Stage 4
- Post 16 Education
- Attendance and Exclusion
- Performance of Vulnerable Groups

Some of the headline outcomes included:-

- 50.1% of children in Stockton achieved a Good Level of Development in Primary Phase – Early Years and Foundation Stage
- End of KS1 2014 outcomes showed increases in all elements (2b+ and

3+) from 2013 outcomes. In 2013, the LA was below national averages for all 6 key measures. Compared to 2013 national averages, 2014 LA outcomes were above in 4 outcomes (2b+ in reading, writing and maths and also in maths Level 3+); equal in writing Level 3+ and below in reading Level 3+ (2013 below by 4%; 2014 below by 2%). Ensuring children achieve higher levels in Reading and Writing at the end of Key Stage 1 will be a focus for the 0-11 team in 2014-15.

- From a 4 year highest ever result in 2013, results in maths at Level 4+ showed a decline of 0.1% and a 2.5% decline at Level 5+. Both results remained higher than any previous outcomes prior to 2013. The change to the maths tests may have affected outcomes. (Before 2014, children were allowed to use calculators to answer questions in Paper 2 of the maths test. No calculators were allowed in any paper in 2014.) Improving pupils' attainment in maths at the end of Key Stage 2 would be a focus for the 0-11 team in 2014-15.

- With regard to Key Stage 4 highly performing schools such as Eggescliffe, All Saints and Conyers had maintained high scores. One of the Borough's larger schools had performed well, Northfield, which had seen its best outcome for five years.

Some of the small schools in the Borough had seen sharp decreases in performance, such as Bishopsgarth and St Patrick's. (Small schools were vulnerable as 5 pupils may mean a difference of between 5% - 7%.)

Grangefield and Bishopsgarth remain below the 40% floor standards for 5 x A* - C including English and Maths. Overall the outcomes for 5 x A* - C including English and Maths had dropped from 2013 at by 2.1%. A table within the report gave the outcomes against the performance indicator of 5 x A*-C. There had been a sharp fall in the results this year. This was due in part to the different values placed on non- GCSEs and the reduction in the number that could be counted in performance tables towards the 5 x A*-C total. The changes in the discounting system had also had an impact.

- With regard to Post 16 Education, Conyers had improved the % of students achieving A*-B grades from 2013 to 52.9% which was an increase of 4.2% (the national figure in 2013 was 52.8%). Other providers had declined in their A*-B percentage. Eggescliffe had slipped from 58.1 in 2013 to 51.4%. SSFC had also dropped 7%. SRC had dropped 3.8%. Nationally there was a drop reported. All providers had maintained their strong A*-E percentage and were in line with or above the National value for 2013.

- At Key stage 4, the results for disadvantaged pupils showed a slight improvement as gaps had narrowed except for 5 x A8-C where there had been a huge dip in results overall. Whilst gaps had narrowed, it was likely they would still be more than the gaps nationally.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The report be noted.
2. The standards and achievement across the Borough be noted.

**CAB
77/14** **The implications of the Cheshire West and Chester Council and Surrey County Council Supreme Court Judgement Relating to Mental Capacity Act Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards**

Consideration was given to a report that provided details of the changes to the

Mental Capacity Act Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards following the Supreme Court Judgement on the Cheshire West and Cheshire Council and Surrey County Council cases. The implications for the Council in relation to this were also outlined, including details of the work in progress to identify the risks and resource implications of the revised legal framework.

Following the Supreme Court Ruling on 19 March 2014 : P -v- Cheshire West and Chester Council and P and Q -v- Surrey County Council, there had been a radical change to the legal definition of and the test for Deprivation of Liberty which must be followed.

There were two key questions that need to be considered when applying the test:-

- Is the person subject to continuous supervision and control?
- Is the person free to leave?

For a person to be deprived of their liberty, they must be subject both to continuous supervision and control and not be free to leave. They must also lack the mental capacity to consent to the relevant care and support arrangements, where they had been put in place by the State. Attached to the report were more details of the Judgment (a link to the full Judgment was embedded in the Department of Health letter).

As a result of this Judgment, a much greater number of existing and potential clients were considered within the scope of the Safeguards, including the care home population and people living in supported living, both within and outside the Borough, who were Stockton residents. These clients required assessments for mental capacity as the first stage in the process. This included people with dementia, a learning disability, a mental health problem and young people between 16-18 with complex needs.

Future planned admissions to care homes and care planning for supported living needed to include an assessment for Deprivation of Liberty (DoL) before admissions to care homes were made / care packages were put in place.

The Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) for people in twenty four hour care settings aged 18 years and over (care homes and hospitals) remained as previously and consisted of six assessments to establish if the DoL was in the client's Best Interests and that care arrangements constituted the least restrictive option to ensure the safety and well being of the client. These assessments were carried out by Best Interest Assessors and doctors approved under the Mental Health Act 1983 (s.12). In complex cases, an application to the Court of Protection should be made. For clients living with support in the community and young people aged between 16 and 18 years, all Deprivations needed to be authorised through the Court of Protection. A Preliminary Judgment had been given by the President of the Court of Protection on the consummate cases presented in June 2014, which had clarified that all cases needed to be considered by a judge and that mental capacity assessments needed to be undertaken by a medical practitioner. Details of the Judgment were attached to the report.

Clients with mental health problems and / or a learning disability who were

resident in, or assessed as needing care in, a hospital facility and would previously have been considered as 'informal' admissions, would need to be assessed for a Deprivation of Liberty Authorisation or for detention under the Mental Health Act. This would require more assessments to be carried out by Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHPs) and, potentially, an increase in detentions under s.3 of the Mental Health Act, with the associated risk of an increased number of clients eligible for s.117 jointly funded NHS and Social Care aftercare. This was of particular importance for Stockton, as there were two independent Mental Health Hospitals in the area that provide Mental Health Services.

The Tees Coroner had decided that all deaths of people subject to an authorised DoL at the time of their death would be treated as a death in custody. The coroner would be informed of the each death and would decide if any examination of the client's records is necessary, on a case by case basis.

Following an initial scoping exercise, a work programme was in progress to ensure that clients were not unlawfully deprived of their liberty. Working practices had also been reviewed to ensure that the new test was embedded in practice and risk to vulnerable clients and the Council mitigated as far as reasonably practicable.

The following dedicated resource was agreed by Corporate Management Team in May 2014 in order to support the required assessments, consideration for authorisation and administration of the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards:-

- 1 WTE Social Worker to liaise with care homes and home care providers to co-ordinate mental capacity assessments and requests for authorisation of potential Deprivation of Liberty.
- 2.4 WTE Best Interests Assessors (BIA) to carry out the Best Interests Assessments.
- 0.5 WTE Administrator to assist with the significant amount of administration that is involved.

Client assessments were being prioritised by client group and care and support arrangements. The clients who had been identified as the first priority were those with dementia or a learning disability who were living in a care home. Clients with a learning disability who live in supported living arrangements were the group identified as next to be assessed. All people subject to Mental Health Act Guardianship, Community Treatment Orders and Conditional Discharge needed to be assessed for potential Deprivation of Liberty. Consideration also needed to be given to incapacitated people who had care needs met by the state but who were living at home with their families

The additional work was creating workload pressures across adult services including:

- Care Managers
- Best Interest Assessors
- Commissioning Managers
- Signatories
- Mental Health Assessors
- Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHPs)

- Administrators
- Legal Services, particularly where authorisation of the Court of Protection would be needed, for example for clients in supported living arrangements.

The additional work for Commissioning Managers, who oversee the administration of the process, and Signatories, who consider the requests for authorisation, was being dealt with without additional resource.

Additional care management resource was required to undertake timely reviews of clients subject to an authorised DoL and so that Mental Capacity Assessments could be fully embedded in practice. Active care management was essential to ensure that any restrictions imposed continue to be proportionate and in each client's Best Interests.

There were also additional direct costs relating to:-

- Payments to Mental Health Act s.12 approved doctors, who are commissioned to carry out the required assessments for clients in twenty-four hour care settings.
- Payments to Independent Mental Capacity Advocates (IMCAs)
- Court of Protection applications for clients living in supported living arrangements. There are costs associated with the application, the hearing and the mental capacity assessment.

The initial exercise could cost up to £725,000. However, this was extremely uncertain and would be clarified as work progresses. The costs in this financial year were not expected to exceed £425,000 and this could be funded from managed surplus.

The next steps would be as follows:-

National

- A Task Group, led by the Association of Adult Social Services (ADASS), has been established to consider the implications of the Supreme Court judgement and to provide practical advice to Local Authorities on how they should respond.
- Voluntary quarterly activity returns have been established and will be collated by the Health and Social care Information Centre.
- Further guidance from the Department of Health is still awaited, but the Court of Protection Preliminary Judgment (Re X) on the consummate cases considered was given on 7.8.14, and is included as Appendix 3. In Re X the President has given guidance on the process for dealing with the anticipated large increase in cases in the Court of Protection. Further guidance and amended court documents will follow, but this should not delay applications where there are unauthorised Deprivations.
- The Law Society will issue new case law guidance relating to what constitutes a DoL.

Local

- The action plan will continue to be implemented.
- Options to incorporate the additional work and potential new ways of

working will be explored and considered at Adult Care Management Team and the Adult Board.

- The Local Executive Committee (Safeguarding Adults) will continue to be informed of progress against the action plan.
- Consideration of the requirements for Quality Assurance of the whole process.
- Consideration of the requirements for ensuring that Mental Health Assessors meet eligibility requirements and the quality of their assessment is satisfactory.
- Close contact is being maintained with regional Councils and NHS partners with the aim of confirming both regional pressures and identifying efficient methods of demand management and emerging best practice.
- The responsibility for ensuring that s.12 doctors have the required indemnity and Disclosure and Barring Scheme clearance in place is no longer being administered regionally on behalf of the Department of Health. Discussions are in progress across the region to establish the most efficient and effective way of carrying out this function.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The content of the report, the implications of the judgement and the requirement for additional work to be carried out be noted.
2. Cabinet agrees to receive a further report on progress against the work plan at the Cabinet meeting to be held on 12th February 2015.

CAB 78/14 Social Fund Localisation - Back On Track - Proposal For The Way Forward

Consideration was given to a report on Social Fund Localisation – Back on Track – Proposal for the Way Forward.

In the local government settlement announcement made in December 2013, Central Government effectively withdrew funding for local welfare assistance arrangements post March 2015. The Government had previously transferred this funding to local authorities to provide, at a local level, alternative provision to replace some of the discretionary Social Fund support that had been administered by the Department Of Work and Pensions (DWP) prior to the Welfare Reform Act 2012.

The Housing and Community Safety Select Committee undertook a scrutiny review of Welfare Reform and presented its final report to Cabinet on 24th April 2014, which included a recommendation that “a sustainable future for the ‘Back on Track’ funding and alternative methods of delivering ‘crisis/short term’ support is identified, and this be considered as part of the future scrutiny work on welfare reform”.

The report outlined the arrangements relating to Back on Track, analysis of the pilot year and a proposed approach going forward which was supported by the Housing and Community Safety Select Committee at their meeting on 18th September, 2014.

The Government in abolishing some of the nationally administered elements of the Social Fund allocated funding for 2013/14 and 2014/15 to Local Authorities to provide replacement provision for:-

- Crisis Loans for Items and Daily Living Expenses
- Community Support Grants

The funding was non ring-fenced and was allocated by government to local authorities as part of the council's mainstream revenue support grant.

In Stockton it was agreed by Cabinet (6 September, 2012) to commission a 12 month local welfare assistance pilot scheme from the third sector, which kept eligibility criteria largely the same as the DWP scheme for the pilot year 2013/14. This was in recognition of the lack of credible usage statistics and client profiles from the DWP needed to design the scheme. The contract was awarded to Five Lamps Organisation and launched as 'Back on Track'.

Lobbying had taken place (LGA, ANEC, some MPs, charities etc.), to have the funding reinstated and the Church Poverty Action Group instigated a Judicial Review which resulted on 16th September, 2014 in the Government agreeing to reconsider its decision to cease funding. The outcome of this was expected in December 2014 when the provisional local government settlement was announced. There was no further funding identified by the Government or within the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan to continue a scheme.

In the meantime the contract for the delivery of the Back on Track pilot had been extended whilst work had been under way to analyse the data from the pilot and develop options for a more sustainable approach going forward.

A Welfare Assistance Reform workshop involving representatives from front line agencies across the voluntary and community sector and Council services including homelessness prevention was held in February to look at what support was available and identify any gaps and opportunities for better linkages. The outcomes from the workshop, alongside discussions with the provider to understand what had worked well and suggestions for change had been used to inform the potential options set out in the report. Some of the issues that came to the fore were:-

- a need for awareness raising of the support that was available across the agencies/charities
- support for working people on low income as well as benefit recipients
- a gap in support for single people under 35 years with no children, crisis or particular health need

In Stockton Borough delivery of the Borough's pilot discretionary scheme was commissioned from Five Lamps who provided an end to end service covering application through to delivery and fitting of goods. The scheme, named 'Back on Track', was intended as a fund of last resort and provides two types of support:-

- a) Crisis Support for people in immediate need (food, fuel clothing, baby consumables), and
- b) Settlement Support to help people remain in the community or move back into the community after a period in supported or unsettled

accommodation (i.e. furniture, carpets, white goods, removal costs). In keeping with the Social Fund criteria clients need to be in receipt of particular benefits in order to be eligible for settlement support.

Pilot Data

Based on the data for 2011/12 from DWP approximately 9,080 annual applications (awarded around £834k) had been anticipated from Stockton borough residents to the elements of the Social Fund transferring across to the LA.

However the data for the year 2013/14 showed a different picture with 1401 applications and 839 approved applications with spend of £205,624. Funding received for 2013/14 was £900,000. Actual spend, including set up costs and management fee, was £311,110, leaving unspent funding of £588,890.

This level of spend reflected the experience of the majority of the social fund replacement schemes in the North East. In addition the initial message on the DWP website indicated that the fund had been abolished rather than transferred to local authorities. Significant work was undertaken with referral agencies, customer services staff and others to ensure they were aware of the availability of the fund in order to signpost clients to it.

In terms of the client group, the majority (62%) of the approved applicants across both crisis and settlement support were in the 25-50 age range. In the over 50s age group that figure was 12% which reflected the experience of the DWP Social Fund scheme which historically had national figures showing pensioners accessing only 8.4% of community care grants and 1.3% of crisis loans as shown in the 2011/12 annual report by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on the Social Fund. The exclusion of old age pensioners from many of the Government's welfare reform changes may also have been a factor in the low level of access by this age group. The majority of approved applicants had no dependent children under the age of 16 which may reflect that the client group has other avenues of support such as Section 17.

The majority of applications were from people living in wards in central Stockton.

Take up was initially slow in the first 2 quarters so in order to realistically assess demand levels for the current scheme it was more realistic to take quarter 4 figures and aggregate them up for the year.

This indicated a potential annual spend of £29,160 on 836 crisis awards and £247,400 on 344 settlement awards. Although the full impact of the welfare reforms may take time to filter through particularly as Universal Credit had yet to be rolled out in the Borough, with latest information suggesting national rollout will not be implemented until at least June 2016 and was likely to take until 2017 to be fully implemented.

A snapshot analysis of the available case logs for April 2013 to end of March 2014 was carried out to better understand the demand levels for the different types of goods available under the scheme.

Analysis of the data indicated:-

- Higher demand levels for relatively lower cost items- food and heating

assistance

- Demand for white goods and carpets. This is also where most of the spend is 2013/14.
- No demand for travelling expenses
- Very little demand for help with removal costs
- Little demand for clothes and baby consumables

Officers had done some mapping of alternative routes for each of those goods to assess availability of support and where the gaps in provision would be if 'Back on Track' was not available. Going forward, regardless of what was decided for Back on Track, the Council would want to work closely with the Stockton Welfare Reform Network (SWAN) to promote the other avenues of support that are available.

This cross referencing indicated that there was availability of food through Food Banks although the client usually had to be referred from an agency.

Clothes were available, with an agency referral, from Teesside Emergency Relief Fund (TERF) and charities.

Baby consumables were available through Section 17 and the low demand levels from Back on Track reflected this.

Travel expenses and removal costs were negligible so the Council may want to reconsider whether they would continue to offer these going forward.

This leaves carpets (very limited availability elsewhere), white goods, furniture, bedding (some availability elsewhere on a referral basis) and heating/electric (very limited support available).

There appeared to be two categories of client:-

- Those with low income but some affordability but no access to affordable loans and
- Those with low income and no affordability for a loan where a grant would be the only way for them to access the goods.

Utilising the available funding and the underspend would only allow the existing Back on Track scheme to continue for a further two full years - 2015/16 and 2016/17, based on the estimated annual spend. In 2017/18 there would be a deficit of £93,407 against the annual cost of £385,199. There was no funding identified in the Medium Term Financial Plan so the scheme would run out of funding at the end of December 2017.

The general consensus from front line providers seems to be that the effects of welfare reform were still working their way through and that the impact would not be fully felt for some time to come, particularly as Universal Credit had yet to be implemented in the borough.

Officers had looked at various options to ensure that support was available for as long as possible. Taking into consideration the pilot data, the feedback from the front line providers workshop and discussion with the current deliverer a holistic package of support had been developed which was set out below for consideration.

The package included:

- Instead of Back on Track use existing alternative routes for baby consumables, clothing.
- Transfer the food element to food banks. Applications are disproportionately costly in terms of administration. The Housing and Community Safety Select Committee is considering food poverty which may lead to the development of a strategy for the Borough. In the meantime funding has been made available by Public Health to invest in co-ordination work to ensure food bank provision in the Borough links into a holistic approach that provides food but also support such as debt advice, income maximisation and mental health pathways, etc. The review of Advice and Guidance that is currently underway will also look at the potential for outreach support to proactively offer advice and guidance to clients visiting food banks.
- Continue to provide grants. The maximum award will be reduced to £500 (currently £1,500) to spread the available funding further. This will be supplemented by loans and vouchers as described below.
- Work alongside, and invest in, Tees Credit Union on a new loans scheme for those people on low incomes who have some affordability but are considered high risk so have no access to affordable High Street credit. This would provide an alternative to high cost credit for people needing household goods in a crisis situation (ie. Washing machine breaks down) which could prevent people getting into a downward spiral of unaffordable debt. Unlike the ordinary credit union loans there would be no requirement to have saved with the credit union for eight weeks before applying for a loan. £100k (£50k of this would be from the Back on Track budget and £50k from the one-off welfare reform funding approved by council in the last budget) would be invested by the Council each year for three years to serve as the loan pot with a view to the Credit Union moving towards a self-sustaining loan fund with a phased repayment of the council's capital funding from year 2017/18. This is based upon all of the loan pot being loaned out and the maximum number of loans being realised and repayments coming in so that the money continues to be recycled. This is very much an untried scheme so it would need to be treated as a pilot and revisited on an annual basis to assess take up, repayments and defaults.

As the investment with the credit union is on a concession basis the intention is that the capital investment will then come back to the Council over a phased period by which time the credit union will have strengthened its sustainability with the income from the loans portfolio, increased business from a larger customer base and a higher profile and the implementation of its new business plan.

- Develop a voucher system for recycled furniture and white goods. Work is underway to consider this alongside the availability of recycled equipment, tests for safety/functionality, guarantee periods and accessibility. Whilst there are local providers currently, consideration is being given to the enhanced approach operated by organisations such as the British Heart Foundation where additional items are awarded free of charge.
- Housing options to continue to administer the rent in advance element to help prevent homelessness.
- Improved communications and advertising to raise awareness within the Council and its partner agencies linking into the Stockton Welfare Agencies Network (SWAN) project which is co-ordinating mapping of welfare reform

related support across the Borough.

In- house delivery had been considered and discounted when the Social Fund delivery was originally transferred across to the authority. However at that time the anticipated volume of applications for the fund had been very high which, combined with a staffing review and administering Discretionary Housing Payments, had raised capacity concerns. Things had moved on and now that DHP processes and staffing arrangements have bedded in and the volume of Back on Track applications is known there has been an opportunity to revisit this.

Delivering the Back on Track and Discretionary Housing Payments schemes together in-house could produce efficiencies for the client and the council particularly as the Housing Benefit team had access to the DWP ICT benefit system which would reduce the need for Back on Track applicants to provide evidence of benefits. Any TUPE implications from moving to in-house delivery from a commissioned contract would need to be factored in and addressed.

It was anticipated that the pared down scheme and in-house delivery would be fully funded through to the end of March 2019. Beyond this, if the scheme were to continue there would be a pressure on the MTFP of around £200,000 in 2019/20 rising to £250,000 in 2023/24.

The existing contract with the deliverer ends on 31st March, 2015, so subject to Cabinet approval, there would be sufficient time for a managed transition including the implementation of systems for in-house delivery by April 2015. Preliminary discussions had taken place with Five Lamps, the current deliverer, and they had indicated that they would work with council officers to facilitate the handover.

The report was considered by Housing and Community Safety Select Committee, as part of their work around welfare reform, on 18 September and their comments are set out below.

“The Committee support the recommendations and welcome the proposals as a way forward for the Back on Track scheme. These will contribute towards the Council’s response to the anti-poverty/welfare reform agenda, and will go some way towards addressing the recommendations the Committee made in its review of Welfare Reform and Financial Inclusion.

“Members received reassurance surrounding the value for money of bringing the scheme in house, and there should be efficiencies for the Council and clients.”

“The Committee noted that in certain circumstances residents on low income but not qualifying benefits, and who were facing a crisis or needed short term support to assist their situation, may not qualify for the scheme, and would therefore request that eligibility be kept under review over the life of the scheme”.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The holistic package of support set out at paragraph 27 which aims to make the available funding last through to 2019 be approved.
2. A progress report be presented to Cabinet six months after the agreed implementation period and that the progress report is also presented to the Housing and Community Safety Select Committee as part of its ongoing monitoring of the action plan for the Welfare Reform Scrutiny review.
3. An annual evaluation report on the package of support be submitted to Cabinet.

**CAB
79/14** **Economic Climate Update Report**

Consideration was given to a report that 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.

Following the recession in 2008 Stockton Council's ambition remained the same; to create a borough that was more confident, vibrant and successful than ever before; where business and people prosper and grow. To do this the Council must understand the nature and extent of opportunities and challenges that exist within Stockton's economy.

The monthly update report enabled a focused 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 being undertaken be supported.

**CAB
80/14** **Local Growth Fund**

Consideration was given to a report on the Local Growth Fund.

Cabinet were informed of the Tees Valley Local Growth Fund (LGF) bid at their meeting on 15 May 2014 (Min. Ref 20/14). Allocations were announced by Government in July 2014 and the report provided an updated position statement on the success of the bid, the infrastructure projects and programmes associated with the bid and the associated work required in developing detailed business cases in order to comply with the 'Due Diligence' process.

The recent announcement of the outcome of the Tees Valley Local Enterprise Partnership Local Growth Fund bid confirmed an historic Growth Deal with the Government which will see £90.3million invested in Tees Valley over the next 4-5 years (£22.9million in 2015/16) to invest in key transport, infrastructure, skills and business support projects that would lead to the creation of a

significant number of additional jobs.

£22.9million had been confirmed in the first year, 2015/16, and as part of the Government's on-going commitment to the Tees Valley LEP it had provided an indicative award of a further £67.4million of funding from 2016/17 onwards. The projects which start in 2015/16 would help to create up to 1,000 jobs, up to 1,500 additional training places, allow up to 1,500 new homes to be built and generate up to £100 million in public and private investment.

The Growth Deal would initially see significant improvements to the strategic road network in Stockton - the A689 at Wynyard, Ingleby Way / Myton Way at Ingleby Barwick and at Teesside Park Drive. Not only would this ease congestion and improve traffic flow, but it would also mean the creation of over a thousand new homes and safeguard jobs.

The Council was also working with the Highways Agency and private sector developers to bring forward complementary highway improvements at A19/A689 Wolviston, A174 Thornaby and Ingleby Barwick in 2014/15. This early investment in key transport improvements clearly demonstrated a commitment to removing some of the barriers to growth thereby improving the bid to DfT.

£3m funding would be available for the following two highway infrastructure schemes in the Borough during 2015/16:-

- (i) Ingleby Way/Myton Way in Ingleby Barwick - road and junction improvements at Ingleby Barwick which will increase the capacity of the road network at key congestion points and allow for the development of new housing.
- (ii) Road widening and signalisation on five roundabouts on the A689 at Wynyard to complement the Highways Agency Pinch Point scheme on the A19/A689 Interchange. This will ease congestion and reduce journey times.

A further allocation of up to £2.3m was available in 2016/17 to complete the projects.

Provisional funding of £0.9m for a strategic maintenance scheme to re-profile and reconstruct Teesside Park Drive, which had suffered for many years from settlement problems, had been agreed for 2016/17 as had a package of Sustainable Transport measures to improve access to job opportunities via walking, cycling, bus and rail.

Construction of a new £6m road to open up access to the south side of Durham Tees Valley Airport, on the Stockton/Darlington boundary has also been given the green light. This would open up access to the proposed Southside Business Park which would provide aviation-related employment opportunities.

In addition, the Tees Valley Business Growth Hub will receive £0.8M in 2015/16 to provide a business grant scheme and a range of coordinated funding and advice services to local businesses. Further indicative funding of £5M had been awarded for the growth hub for 2016/17 onwards. This would benefit Stockton by supporting investment in business growth, the creation of new jobs and the safeguarding of existing jobs within the Borough.

All of the projects with 2015/16 allocations would need to have detailed Business Cases that would be subjected to a due diligence process in accordance with the TVU Governance Assurance Framework. An independent consultant was appointed in early September to commence assessment of the business cases. This work was estimated to take 10 weeks to December 2014 with final sign off around February / March 2015.

Officers would continue to work closely with TVU and the private sector on the Business Cases and advance preparatory work in the coming months. TVU had developed due diligence mechanisms and a performance management framework to ensure there was robust governance around the growth fund allocations. A copy of this performance management framework was attached to the report and Cabinet were asked to endorse the mechanism.

At a local level it was important that there was robust programme management systems and governance in place to ensure all projects were clear on what was expected of them at each stage of their development, from project approval by government, through to due diligence, delivery, monitoring and closure. TVU's Programme Management Framework (PMF) would help to handle projects from 'cradle to grave'. This work was being done with full support from SBC as Accountable Body.

It was requested Cabinet note that the responsibility for any future developments / amendments to the PMF would sit with the TVU governance groups, as defined by their roles detailed in the document. This was particularly important as government timescales may slip; therefore the PMF may not be fully informed of any future governmental requirements prior to approval being sought.

For 2017/18 - 2019/20 the Council would be looking to propose to the LEP a number of further strategic schemes including highway improvements in West Stockton to facilitate housing development in that area and to commence the Portrack Relief Road scheme. The LEP were considering a process by which the five Authorities and the private sector could put forward local growth fund schemes to be considered for the future years' funding. This process was in its infancy and would commence in the coming months to ensure that investment priorities were robustly developed and would be reported back to Cabinet.

In the longer term (2020-2025) the Council had identified the Wynyard second access, A19 Widening Norton to A689 (including replacement of the concrete carriageway), Elton Interchange to Yarm Road Interchange lane gain as its priorities to assist growth.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The content of the report be noted.
2. The use of TVU governance mechanisms for review and approval, including the performance management framework in Appendix 1 of the local growth fund programme be endorsed. The Council will be represented by the Leader of the Council.

CAB 81/14 Rail Devolution & rail North : Influencing the Future of Northern and TransPennine Services

Consideration was given to a report that provided an update on rail devolution in the North of England, provided background information on Rail North, set out the proposed governance arrangements for Rail North Ltd and the Association of Rail North Partner Authorities, and seeks the approval of Cabinet for the Council to become a member of both bodies. A copy of the Rail North Voting Matrix was attached to the report.

With regard to the next steps Officers be authorised to take the necessary steps when appropriate for the Council to become a member of these bodies then appropriate steps would be taken to ensure that this happens as quickly as possible. Tees Valley representation would also be finalised. A copy of the Rail North Voting Matrix was attached to the report.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The proposed governance arrangements for Rail North Ltd (RNL) and the Association of Rail North Partner Authorities ("The Association") be noted and it be agreed in principle that the Council should become a member of both bodies. The Leader will sit as a representative on the Association.
2. The Head of Technical Services be authorised in consultation with the Leader to make the appropriate arrangements to enable the Council to be admitted to membership, by entering into the RNL Members Agreement.
3. It be noted that a representative of the Tees Valley Local Authorities will be appointed to the Leaders' Committee (currently known as the Leaders' Forum) and will become a Director of RNL.
4. A further report be presented to Cabinet when the Heads of Terms for the DFT/RNL Partnership are finalised.

CAB 82/14 Minutes of Various Bodies

Consideration was given to a report that presented minutes of various bodies.

In accordance with the Council's Constitution or previous practice the minutes of the meeting of the bodies indicated below were submitted to Members for consideration:-

Stockton Local Safeguarding Children Board – 17th July 2014
Stockton Local Safeguarding Children Board – 21st August 2014
Safer Stockton Partnership – 24th June 2014
Tees Valley Unlimited – Leadership Board – 30th April 2014
Safer Stockton Partnership – 6th May 2014

RESOLVED that the minutes be received.

**CAB
83/14** **Cabinet Member Portfolios**

Consideration was given to a report that provided details of previous amendments to Cabinet Member Portfolios and invited comments on the proposed changes from 2015. These proposals stem from the Leaders commitment to review Cabinet and Scrutiny structures to contribute to the 15% efficiency savings target of £130,000. Agreement of this proposal would result in savings of £24,120 in addition to the Scrutiny savings proposal which if agreed would save £20,100. Savings proposed by the Independent remuneration Panel (15/16) and agreed by Council were part of a wider set of savings including e.g. Members. LGPS membership ending, budget savings total £103,560 not including £10,416 from freezing Basic Allowances for two years.

In May 2008 Council agreed to the split of the then Corporate and Social Inclusion Portfolio into two. Corporate Management and Finance and Access and Communities Portfolios were established. In addition the Leader's portfolio was extended to include Sports Development, Tourism, Development of Tees Valley Sport Partnership and High Achievement in Sport.

In June 2011, in accordance with the New Executive Arrangements approved by the Council, the Leader agreed revised portfolios. The previous additions to the Leader's portfolio were removed with Tourism moving into the Regeneration and Transport Portfolio and the Sport elements moving to the Arts Leisure and Culture Portfolio.

A Deputy Leaders portfolio was created to fulfil the responsibilities of the Leader in his absence.

Emergency Planning was transferred from the Corporate Management and Finance portfolio and added to the Environment Portfolio.

The Access and Communities Portfolio was strengthened with the addition of Community Development and Empowerment which had previously been included in the Regeneration and Transport Portfolio. Fairtrade was also included as an additional responsibility.

The current portfolios were attached to the report.

Following on from consultation with Cabinet on the budget review of Democratic Services and in considering the previous arrangements discussed at paras 1-6, the options for change to Cabinet portfolios had been developed. The proposed criteria for change seek to strengthen portfolios through the merger of similar themes and take advantage of natural alignments in portfolios and link specifically to the Council Plan themes.

Taking the above criteria into consideration the Cabinet portfolios proposed were as follows, this proposal reduced the number of Cabinet portfolios by two, from 2015 saving £ 24120 / annum:-

Cabinet Portfolio Current Cabinet Portfolio Proposed

Leader - Leader - Corporate Management & Finance
Deputy Leader Adult Services & Health - Adult Services & Health
Access & Communities - Access, Communities & Community Safety
Arts Leisure & Culture - Arts Leisure & Culture
Children & Young People - Children & Young People
Corporate Management & Finance - N/A
Environment - Environment & Housing
Regeneration & Transport - Regeneration & Transport
Housing & Community Safety - N/A
Reduction in Portfolios - 2
£ 24120

NB Deputy Leader will be assigned responsibility in addition to a Portfolio

RESOLVED that the proposal to reduce the number of Cabinet portfolios as detailed within the report be endorsed.

**CAB
84/14** **Highway Infrastructure Investment**

Consideration was given to a report on the best use of additional resources that had been secured through government grant towards road maintenance activities and how resources could continually be targeted to support the most localised solutions which were able to be funded through the community participation budget which was due to end in March 2015. The report set out the intention of a £9M investment in highway and footpath maintenance activities which included small community participation projects over the next three years.

As part of the Council's 2014-15 budget setting process, Council agreed the allocation of £5.89M to support future investments. There were significant new developments coming forward across the Borough. A detailed Infrastructure Strategy in response to such developments, which was particularly relevant to South of the Borough was in production. An allocation of the above figure towards increased funding of roads and footpaths had been discussed however the Council had received external funding primarily towards investment in roads and footpaths and a scrutiny review of road and footpath maintenance was ongoing which would help identify areas to be targeted for further interventions over and above normal spending patterns.

The community participation budget had over a number of years provided a successful mechanism to carry out very localised solutions to problems with highway infrastructure and these could include car parking and fencing that aid pedestrian and traffic movements. The report considered the additional resources for highway and footpath maintenance that were being considered by the Regeneration & Transport Select Committee, what opportunities would exist to use this mechanism to continue to provide local selections on a ward by ward basis.

RECOMMENDED to Council that:-

- 1. The success of the community participation budget be noted and**

the use of £800K over the financial years 2015-16 and 2016-17 (£400K per year) be approved from the approved Medium Term Financial Plan allocation for investment to use on local highway and environmental improvements using the community participation budget protocols and funding distribution mechanism.

RESOLVED that:-

2. The additional funding received from Government for additional highway and footpath maintenance be noted. The Council's Regeneration & Transport Scrutiny Committee are currently reviewing the priorities for this additional spend which would be reported to Cabinet separately.

3. It be noted that over the next three years £9M will be available from government grant and additional revenue support for the investment in highway and footpath maintenance and community participation budget project.

**CAB
85/14**

Infrastructure Investment

Consideration was given to a report on Infrastructure Investment. The pattern of economic growth, impact of the National Planning Policy Framework and the infrastructure needs in general in the Borough were changing rapidly. Principle growth in population had always been around Ingleby Barwick and this continued apace with additional housing approvals and the provision of a free school by the government. Both Eaglescliffe and Yarm had seen a mix of allocated and unallocated housing sites come forward with approvals being granted in the context of NPPG. All of this activity placed strain on the Borough's infrastructure in the broader sense and meeting the needs of the community, which was diverse in the ancient setting of Yarm compared to the new build of Ingleby and traditional layout of Thornaby, required careful planning of infrastructure needs going forward.

By infrastructure the report considered not only roads and transport links but also schools, leisure facilities, green spaces, parks and town centres. It was not only the growth that was driving the need to invest in infrastructure but also analysis of survey information and the observations of Elected Members had been brought together to support the investment proposal in the report.

As part of the Council's 2014-15 budget setting process, Council agreed the allocation of £5.590M to support future investments and regeneration related acquisitions and also £300K to support feasibility work. There were significant new developments coming forward across the Borough. A detailed Infrastructure Strategy in response to such developments, which was particularly relevant to South of the Borough was in production.

The report also highlighted other significant investment and activities planned in the South of the Borough.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The recent investment in primary school capacity in the south of the borough and emerging trend of required primary school places in Ingleby Barwick be noted. Any future investment decisions will be subject to a further report to Cabinet following the review of Children and Young People Select Committee and their work into school organisation and admission arrangements.
2. The principle of developing a pedestrian link between Ingleby Barwick and Preston Park be approved and that £35k be allocated to develop a scheme to allow funding sources to be actively pursued. The funding for the feasibility work to be allocated from the investment fund.
3. The investment of £18.9m into Highway Infrastructure in the schemes outlined in paragraph 31 be noted.

RECOMMENDED to Council:-

4. **The investment of £1.2M into Yarm town centre public realm and facilities be noted and the allocation from the investment fund of a further £150k alongside the £60k available to develop the library facilities in Yarm be supported.**
5. **The principle of the development of additional Leisure facilities in Ingleby Barwick be approved and that further feasibility work be undertaken to determine the most appropriate mix of facilities and location. The funding for this development work of £175K be approved from the feasibility element of the investment fund. In addition £3M from the investment fund be approved in principle towards the scheme, which will be used as the basis to pursue external funding with Sports England and Tees Active. The full costs of the scheme will be considered in the 2015/16 Medium Term Financial Plan.**
6. **The investment of £800k in additional car parking provision within Preston Park from the allocated investment fund be approved.**

**CAB
86/14**

Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2014

Consideration was given to a report that sets out the existing arrangements for polling districts and places and proposed changes taking into account the submission of the Returning Officer and feedback from public consultation.

Each Local Authority was required to carry out reviews of Polling Districts and Polling Places in its area.

The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 changed the timing of these reviews and the next review must be held between 1 October 2013 and 31 January 2015 with subsequent reviews held within a 16 month period starting on 1 October every fifth year after 1 October 2013. Ward boundaries were unaffected by the review.

The Council's last review was held in 2011 when a number of minor changes were made.

A Council's area was divided into polling districts with one or more districts making up a ward, with a polling place being the area or building within a polling district in which a polling station is situated.

The review considered:-

- The boundaries of polling districts – for example, are they well defined? Do they follow natural boundaries? Are there suitable transport links? Are there any obstacles to crossing polling district boundaries?
- Polling Places – the location, size and accessibility of the polling place and its availability now and in the future
- Polling Stations – the suitability and accessibility of the room or area for use as a polling station

In addition to the above considerations, during the European Elections 2014, the opportunity was taken to complete the Electoral Commission's evaluation templates in order to assess the suitability / accessibility of the polling place / station. Presiding Officers were also asked to record any complaints/ comments received.

Tees Valley Unlimited also provided electorate projections for the polling district boundaries in each year and up to December 2018. This took into account new housing and demolitions.

The Returning Officer's submission was published on 7 July 2014 and summarised the existing arrangements, key issues identified from the recent European Elections, any notable projected changes in electorate and made proposals for changes to polling districts / places.

The proposals sought to combine polling districts where electorate was low, identify more appropriate polling places where adverse comments had been received on the location / suitability of current venues and identify alternatives to using mobile stations which were expensive and unpopular with voters. The proposals took into account Electoral Commission Guidance that the number of electors allocated to a particular polling station should not exceed 2,500 not including postal voters.

The Returning Officers proposals resulted in an overall reduction of twelve polling districts / stations (including two mobile stations) and changes to two further polling places.

More detailed comments from the European Elections in relation to the suitability of existing polling stations would be taken into account in the planning for future electoral events.

The Statutory Notice publicising the review was displayed on/ sent to:-

- Website
- Libraries
- Community Pharmacies
- GP Practice Managers
- Healthwatch

- Tees Active Leisure Centres
- Community Centres/ Village Halls

In addition, the Statutory Notice and the Returning Officer's submission was displayed / sent to:-

- Municipal Buildings
- Website (with accompanying plans)
- All Councillors
- MPs
- Parish Councils
- Disability Groups/ BME/faith community
- Other interested persons/ bodies

All correspondence sent to the Returning Officer as part of the review had been published on the Council's website. A table within the report contained a summary of the comments received and comments / revised proposals in response to the consultation feedback.

Existing arrangements for all wards and the final proposals of the Returning Officer following consultation were attached to the report. The final proposals result in a reduction of seven polling districts / stations, a reduction of one mobile station and three further changes to polling places.

RECOMMENDED to Council that the recommended changes to Polling Districts and Polling Places be approved.

**CAB
87/14** **Future Role of Scrutiny**

Consideration was given to a report that provided an overview of the Council's scrutiny arrangements and discusses the future of scrutiny at Stockton. The proposals in the report fulfilled the Leader of the Council's commitment to review Cabinet and Scrutiny structures to contribute to the 15% efficiency savings target of £130,000. Agreement of this proposal would result in savings of £20,100 in addition to the Cabinet savings proposal which if agreed would save £24,120. Savings proposed by the Independent Remuneration Panel (15/16) and agreed by Council are part of a wider set of savings including e.g. Members. LGPS membership ending, budget savings total £103,560 not including £10,416 from freezing Basic Allowances for two years.

At Stockton, scrutiny had provided an excellent platform for non-executive Members to have direct involvement with policy review and development, performance review and championing of community issues. The development of collaborative scrutiny arrangements had ensured that the scrutiny work programme had supported delivery of the Council's priorities including the efficiency agenda. Scrutiny had proved to be particularly valuable when addressing sensitive issues or reviewing public facing services.

Scrutiny was a statutory requirement introduced under the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000. The Act required Councils operating Executive arrangements to have a scrutiny function. The main legislative provisions of

the Local Government Act 2000 in relation to scrutiny enable Committees and their Members to:-

Review and/or scrutinise

- Decisions made by Cabinet and Council Officers in relation to key decisions
- Actions carried out within the remit of the Council
- The performance of the Council in relation to targets and policy objectives; and
- Have the right to call in and examine (in accordance with the agreed timescale), decisions made by Cabinet, before the decision is implemented

Local Authorities also had the power to scrutinise health issues and services, as introduced in the Health and Social Care Act 2001. The Health Select Committee may review any matter relating to the planning, provision and operation of health services. In relation to major health service re-design, the Health Select Committee must be consulted on proposals and Council had the power to refer a proposal to the Secretary of State.

Legislation also required the designation of a Committee to scrutinise crime and disorder matters. Housing and Community Safety Committee had been so designated at Stockton.

Legislation identified key partner agencies that had a duty to co-operate with the scrutiny process. In respect of health scrutiny, legislation had extended this power to cover all providers of NHS-funded healthcare.

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 established the Police and Crime Panel to scrutinise the Police and Crime Commissioner. Police and Crime Panels also undertake review work to complement their other roles.

The Localism Act gave Councils greater flexibility over governance models including a power to return to a Committee model (whilst allowing overview and scrutiny to operate within a Committee model). Other minor changes were introduced including the requirement for Executive members to respond to Scrutiny recommendations within two months and provision for Members of the Council who were not members of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee to refer an item to one of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees as long as the matter was relevant to the functions of the Committee. The Act also removed the link between the scrutiny committee powers to scrutinise partner authorities and improvement targets in LAA. Partners were required to have regard to the reports and recommendations of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees that related to any of their functions exercised in relation to the committee's area or residents of that area. This widens the partners' activities that overview & scrutiny committees can scrutinise.

Councils must also appoint a Designated Scrutiny Officer to support the work of the Council's overview and scrutiny committees which in Stockton's case was the Head of Democratic Services

Increasingly, there was an expectation by external inspection regimes that Member scrutiny should play an integral part in self-regulation providing

independent review and challenge of Council services.

In December 2005, Council approved new arrangements which sought to strengthen co-ordination of the scrutiny work programme. Key features of the new arrangements, which were still in place, included:

- Greater emphasis on policy review and development work
- Establishment of Executive Scrutiny Committee to co-ordinate the work programme
- Strengthened project management of in depth scrutiny reviews
- Establishment of a Scrutiny Liaison Forum to facilitate dialogue between scrutiny and Cabinet Members. This enables CMT and Cabinet Members to comment on priorities for the scrutiny work programme.
- Improved communication mechanisms, including regular “tri partite” discussions between Scrutiny Members, Cabinet Members and Officers during the course of reviews and the appointment of a Link Officer.

The Council’s scrutiny function had consistently received positive feedback from external inspection. The last corporate assessment in 2008 stated that Scrutiny provided rigorous policy review and had made a significant contribution to service improvement. However, the assessment commented that the scrutiny process would benefit from additional opportunities for challenge. In response to this and in reviewing best practice across the Region, annual overview meetings were established to provide Members with an overview of all the services reporting to the various Select Committees and to question Cabinet Members and Senior Officers on their performance.

In addition, arrangements to monitor the implementation of agreed scrutiny recommendations were introduced. Progress reports submitted to Select Committee monitor the implementation of recommendation but also helped the Committees to understand the impact of review work.

The function had also been praised in more recent inspections. In 2010, the Care Quality Commission Inspection stated that Overview and Scrutiny Committees were effective with Members giving detailed attention to key policy issues. The safeguarding inspection by OFSTED stated that good scrutiny arrangements were in place with good examples of the engagement of children and young people in reviewing processes leading to change and that scrutiny arrangements have had an impact on developing services and achieving cost effectiveness.

The Council’s scrutiny function had proved itself to be flexible and adaptable to changing priorities. The Select Committee work programme from 2009 onwards played a key role in supporting the Council’s EIT programme enabling non-executive Councillors to challenge services and had meaningful input into reviews. Close involvement of scrutiny with the EIT process at Stockton helped it to remain transparent, accountable and open to Stockton residents and enabled Councillors to have a meaningful input to reviews and inform difficult decisions on service priorities.

In response to high profile cases in the media relating to the quality and safety

of health and social care services and the increased expectation on Councils to put in place internal mechanisms to undertake rigorous review and challenge, Children and Young People Select Committee receive quarterly performance reports in respect of children's services – this included a selection of performance indicators linked to priorities in the Council Plan, along with commentary on other performance issues arising during each quarter. In addition, reports were considered in respect of the challenges identified at the last overview meeting such as adoption timescales, School and Academy Performance and NEETs.

Adult Services and Health Select Committee also received six-monthly performance reports on adult social care issues and a range of other reports and updates were provided as part of the enhanced performance management arrangements. This ensured an increased focus on safeguarding and the quality of health and care services. These included Annual Reports from the Adult Services and CQC, SBC Quality Standards Frameworks for Care Homes, NHS Quality Accounts; and reports from Healthwatch including Enter and View Reports etc. In addition all relevant CQC inspection reports were circulated to all Members.

With the abolition of external inspection regimes, an increasingly important role had emerged for scrutiny to play in self-regulation. In addition, the quality and safety of health and care services (e.g. Mid Staffordshire Inquiry, Winterbourne View, Rotherham Sexual Exploitation) had been a matter of intense public interest reinforcing the importance of robust scrutiny of health and social care and also children's services. Any future framework for scrutiny should seek to ensure greater focus on these areas utilising enhanced scrutiny powers to scrutinise all commissioners and providers.

It was essential that resources were deployed in the most effective way continuing to demonstrate the value added through scrutiny. It was therefore proposed that a scrutiny model be developed that continued to strengthen the role of scrutiny focusing on statutory functions, the quality and safety of services for vulnerable groups and holding services to account. It was proposed that in line with the reduction Cabinet Member posts that the number of Standing Select Committee's was reduced from seven to five whilst retaining Executive Scrutiny Committee as the co-ordinating scrutiny body. Attached to the report were details the existing and proposed scrutiny structure.

In the new model, Executive Scrutiny Committee would retain its co-ordinating role but would also be responsible for any task and finish reviews that arose in relation to corporate issues.

The Children and Young People Select Committee, Crime and Disorder Select Committee and Adult Services and Health Select Committee would be responsible for the priority issues for scrutiny and Members serving on these Committees would need to have / develop a robust knowledge of the services and legislative framework in relation to matters falling within their remit. These Committees would also need to have a detailed understanding of the performance framework within the context of their Committees. The Corporate Director of Children, Education and Social Care was continuing to work with the

Head of Democratic Services and the Committees to strengthen this role particularly in relation to the role of Children and Young People Select Committee under the new OFSETD Inspection Framework.

Under the proposed structure, the People and Place Committees would undertake scrutiny reviews within these themes, for example, an issue relating to the arts or leisure could be considered by the People Select Committee whilst an issue relating to housing or the built environment could be considered by the Place Select Committee. This would continue to allow Councillors to opt to sit on Committees where they had a particular interest in the subject matter. However, it was proposed that the flexibility be retained for Select Committees to undertake review work outside of their remits where priorities dictate.

Although there had been an on-going programme of training and development offered to scrutiny Members to respond to national and local developments, this would again need to be reviewed to ensure that the Committees had the necessary skills and competencies to meet their new roles. Stockton had scoped and successfully lobbied to secure regional funding to develop a package of scrutiny training. The Regional Scrutiny Joint Member / Officer Network approved the use of funding to develop a programme which Councils would be able to use in-house within their own Committees.

In reducing the number of Select Committees, consideration could be given to increasing the size of the Committees (currently nine members per Committee).

However, retaining the size of Select Committees at nine, although this would mean that non-executive Councillors would sit on just one Select Committee, this would have the benefit of each Member being able to devote more time and attention to the work of their Select Committee. It may also alleviate the problems that had been experienced with Members' time and attention being spread too thinly, leading to attendance issues at some Committees. Increasing the size of the Select Committees may lead to problems with Committees being too large and unwieldy and giving Members less time to devote to the work of their Committee(s).

In addition Members would still be required to fulfil roles on quasi-judicial committees - Planning and Licensing, plus a range of other roles including outside bodies, Audit Committee, Health and Wellbeing Board, Appeals and Complaints etc.

Cabinet was requested to recommend to Council that the number of Scrutiny Committees be reduced by two as detailed in the attachment to the report.

RECOMMENDED to Council that the number of Scrutiny Committees be reduced by two as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.