

Corporate, Adult Services & Social Inclusion Select Committee

A meeting of Corporate, Adult Services & Social Inclusion Select Committee was held on Tuesday, 3rd June, 2008.

Present: Cllr David Coleman (Chairman), Cllr Mrs Lynne Apedaile, Cllr Mrs Ann Cains, Cllr Aidan Cockerill, Cllr Mrs Suzanne Fletcher, Cllr Andrew Larkin, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Roy Rix

Officers: S Lee (PP), M Batty (DNS), Mrs J Danks, R Holland, Mrs S Reay and Mrs J Spittle (R), Mrs T Harrison and N Hart

Also in attendance: None

Apologies: Cllr Mick Womphrey

1 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Mrs Cains declared a personal non prejudicial interest in relation to item 7 - Older People Action Plan Safer Stockton Partnership Contributions, due to the mention of Stockton Home Safety Association in the report of which she Chairs.

2 Sickness Absence-Progress Update

Members were provided with a progress update following the implementation of the recommendations from the scrutiny review undertaken in 2006.

There had been a steady reduction in sickness absence days but officers felt that more could be done; as a result a team had been created within Human Resources to offer support and tackle the more complex cases relating to sickness absence. It was hoped that the group would be able to reduce sickness absence further.

Members raised the following queries:

- The existence of family friendly policies
- Accuracy of figures and availability of breakdowns of the figures including the numbers of male/female absences, full/part time
- The level of absence considered acceptable by the CPA
- Return to work interviews and collection/monitoring of data

Members were advised that a family friendly policy existed in schemes such as flexible working and this would be extended in the future through the Workwise project.

Officer reported that a great deal of work had been undertaken when compiling the figures to ensure their accuracy. In addition Human Resources were audited on the figures; therefore Officers had full confidence that the figures were complete and correct.

Breakdowns of the figures for male full time, male part time, female full time and female part time for each department could be provided for the Committee.

Members were advised that the Audit commission performance data provided

an upper quartile bench mark of an average of 8.5 days annual absence per individual. Stockton Borough Council was currently achieving 10.9 which represented a reduction in absence over the last 3 years. It was noted that this reduction was in part as a result of improving the systems of recording absence and changes to the Absence management Policy.

It was noted that procedures for conducting return to work interviews were now more established and that sickness could not be closed until the return to work interview form was returned to Human Resources.

CONCLUDED that the progress report update be noted.

3 Progress Update-Stockton and Darlington Partnership

Members were provided with a progress update on the scrutiny review of Stockton Darlington Partnership; and were introduced to Sue Reay, the new Partnership Manager.

The partnership was given a name which provided its own identity; the name was Xentrall, standing for 'Excellent Central Services'.

A full benefits realisation plan had been developed with mechanisms in place to measure both tangible and non tangible benefits. Members requested details of what these benefits actually were together with the cost of the digital press machine purchased. It was hoped that within ten years savings of £7 million pounds would be made.

Members noted that the Business Case had been completed, the Legal Agreement had been finalised and throughout there had been increased and continued communication and involvement with staff. Stronger project management arrangements had also been put in place along with detailed development of plans and regular progress reporting.

Members requested a breakdown of costs for the work carried out by the consultancy firm and marketing company which were employed to project manage the development of the new partnership and to develop the name and logo of the partnership.

It was noted that due to health and safety investigations, regarding the intended location of the computer room in Darlington, there had been some delay in this aspect of the process.

Members queried the redundancy which came about as a result of the partnership and were advised that officers had worked closely with the individual and the unions but unfortunately they had not been able to find a suitable post for the individual. While it was a regrettable situation, every effort had been made and all procedures had been followed.

CONCLUDED that:-

1. The progress report update be noted.
2. The Partnership Manager provide Members with a breakdown of costs for the

services provided by the Consultancy firm and the marketing company, carried out on behalf of the Partnership; as well as details of the benefits likely to be realised by the Partnership and the cost of the digital press obtained.

4 Meeting Venues-Progress Update

Members discussed the progress update of the scrutiny review for meeting venues.

Members raised concern that the issue of transport directly outside the Town Hall was still unresolved. They were advised that the Council were working on a traffic regulation scheme that would enable wheelchair useable taxi's to drop off and collect customers outside the Town Hall and that a report on this scheme would be presented to the next meeting.

Members also queried whether something was to be done to enable taxi's to use the green bus lanes and were advised that a scrutiny review would be taking place in the next municipal year that could include consideration of this issue.

Reference was made to general 'housekeeping' and safety procedures that should be announced at the start of each Council/Committee meetings, so that all present were aware of emergency exits and other procedures. It was requested that Democratic Services prepared suitable advice that could be made available at every meeting.

CONCLUDED that:-

1. The progress report update be noted.
2. A report on the permit scheme regarding taxi use on the High Street be reported to the next meeting.
3. Democratic Services be requested to prepare suitable 'housekeeping' and safety procedure advice that may be made available at every Council Committee meeting.

5 Consultation-Progress Update

Consideration was given to a progress update in respect of the Council's Consultation Plan, which now included the PCT on board.

CONCLUDED that the progress report update be noted.

6 Older People Action Plan – Safer Stockton Partnership Contributions

Members were provided with a briefing note with specific response to the three actions arising from the Older People Strategy for the Safer Stockton Partnership.

With regard to the development of multi-agency strategies to safeguard older people, exploratory discussions were taking place with Paul Green, the Adult Protection Co-ordinator, and colleagues from Children Education and Social Care about how best to protect people with learning disabilities, and maybe also those with mental health problems, from abuse in the community. The initial

emphasis was likely to be on making sure that practitioners in learning disability and mental health services and in community safety were aware of the issue and of one another's roles, and how to access services. An event was to be held on 13 June to fulfil those purposes.

The multi-agency Offensive Incident Procedure was currently under review, with a view to making it more user friendly. One of the new features would be a standard to respond to incidents reported by vulnerable people, including those who were vulnerable on the grounds of old age, within one working day.

With regard to preventing people from being the victims of commercial crimes in their own home, details were provided of two pilot 'No Cold Calling Zones' implemented in 2007/08, targeted on neighbourhoods with concentrations of older residents. Officers were looking at rolling out the scheme to other areas in the borough.

Members requested that the scheme be placed in areas that would be of maximum benefit to local residents and that the use of adhesive labels within the scheme be reviewed.

It was believed that doorstep traders were now challenging 'no cold calling zones' with a test case, the results of which could affect the scheme. Details of the outcome of this, and the availability of a list of registered trade people which could be distributed to local residents were requested to be provided by the Head of Community Protection.

Members also queried how they could consult with their constituents in no cold calling zones if they could not call door to door? The Head of Community Protection advised that he would look into the query and report back to Members.

Details were also provided of a Doorstoppers/Operation Strongbow volunteer programme that had been developed to deliver "Beware the Bogey Man" training to vulnerable groups by mature volunteers. The scheme had been the subject of a successful lottery bid via Community Service Volunteers (a national charity) and their Retired and Senior Volunteers Programme (RSVP) and Stockton Home Safety Association; and training of volunteers by Trading Standards and Licensing staff was to commence. The programme would provide advice to individuals and groups on how to reduce the risk of being victimised, and would go live at the end of June.

Trading Standards, through the NETSA Scambusters Team, had also designed and distributed a range of posters and a leaflet warning of the dangers of doorstep callers.

Members were also provided with figures showing targets in relation to preventing people being victims of commercial crimes in their home and reducing fear of crime in terms of fear of walking alone outside, to be measured via MORI 2008, and that these targets had been included in the new Community Safety Plan for the Borough 2008-2011.

Relevant extracts from the analysis of the Community Safety Audit 2007 were provided to Members. The analysis showed that the net positive impact on

feelings of safety for people aged 55 and over was greater than for the average of all respondents of all ages, and that people in this age group were also more likely to feel well informed, and to answer the questions, than respondents of all ages.

Members made reference to the scheme to provide door chains and window locks to properties, and were advised that this was a selective programme funded at a cost of £20,000 per annum, responding to referrals from the Police and Domestic Violence Unit to carry out such works. Funding for this programme was guaranteed for a further 12 months. Details were also requested on the Handyman Service provided via Age Concern.

CONCLUDED that:-

1. The Head of Community Protection to provide further details for members regarding the 'no cold calling zone' test case; the implications of such zones on Councillors constituency work and the list of registered traders requested.
2. Details of the handyman service be provided to Members of the Committee.