

Corporate, Adult Services & Social Inclusion Select Committee

A meeting of Corporate, Adult Services & Social Inclusion Select Committee was held on Tuesday, 6th January, 2009.

Present: Cllr Mick Stoker (Chairman), Cllr Mrs Ann Cains, Cllr Mrs Suzanne Fletcher, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell and Cllr Roy Rix.

Officers: G Murrigan (R), Mrs T Harrison and Mrs J Trainer (LD)

Also in attendance: Mrs A Agius (Executive Officer, Catalyst)

Apologies: Cllr Mrs Lynne Apedaile, Cllr Aidan Cockerill, Cllr Andrew Larkin, Cllr Mick Womphrey and Mrs T Fraser.

1 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2 Draft Minutes of the Meeting held on 18th November 2008

CONCLUDED that the draft minutes of the meeting held on 18th November 2008 be agreed as a correct record and be forwarded to Council for consideration.

3 To receive an update on the role and operation of Catalyst from Alison Agius, Executive Officer, Catalyst.

(Executive Summary from Voluntary & Community Sector Final Report attached)

The Executive Officer of Catalyst provided Members with an update on the role and operation of Catalyst in accordance with the recommendations of the task and finish review of the Voluntary and Community Sector.

Members were advised that the Executive Officer had been in post for six months.

Catalyst had been launched in November 2008; the launch had been attended by over 70 groups/organisations. Membership forms for Catalyst were distributed and were currently being completed and returned.

Members were provided with the current draft of their Strategy. The draft would be revised once the Council of Interest meeting had taken place.

Initial discussions were taking place regarding Catalyst taking over administration of the voluntary sector support fund, however this would not take place unless the Catalyst board were in agreement; and there were also issues regarding interests which would need to be resolved before they could take place. A paper was being prepared for consultation with the Sector on how to link funding with the objectives of the sustainable community strategy.

Catalyst's first priority was to form a Council of Interest and agree core values; the membership would meet every three months in response to Member's

requests. There were 30 seats available on the Council of Interest.

Members were advised that Catalyst was a strategic body and would not exercise an operational role. The vision the Executive Officer held for Catalyst was to provide an environment in which third sector organisations were inspired, supported and empowered to achieve their own missions.

The vision was of a coherent and single sector, working together in partnership to shape and deliver the services the communities needed in the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees. Catalyst wanted to build on the ethos of support and partnership inherent within the sector by extending it to enable organisations to work together in sourcing funds and opportunities.

Collaboration for tendering, bidding, shared services and resources was a positive way forward and would bring the sector together as one strong voice which could then be used to define policy and shape services for the people of the Borough.

Catalyst was making progress in achieving the vision.

CONCLUDED that:

1. The update report be noted.
2. The Executive Officer be thanked for the work that had been carried out to date.

4 To receive a Presentation on Workwise from Gavin Murrigan, Organisation Development Manager, Human Resources

Members were provided with an update report on the elements of the 'Workwise' scheme following the monitoring of the sickness absence scrutiny review which had taken place in the summer of 2008.

Members were advised that Stockton Borough Council had carried out a pilot scheme called 'Flexible Working' which sought to improve home life/work life balance, reduction of stress, morale issues and sickness.

The findings of the initial pilot scheme in Housing Benefits showed:

- 80% of staff reported improved morale – and families also benefited
- Savings on child care costs
- Children were happier
- Helped with other caring responsibilities
- Did not have to ask managers for time off for appointments
- Some staff had been able to work additional hours

- Performance
 - Performance improved by 17% – processing times had reduced and accuracy had increased
 - Fewer last minute holiday requests to deal with emergencies
 - Worked earlier or later to get peace and quiet to concentrate on difficult cases

- Worked additional hours at year end and took the time off when systems were down
- No last minute rush to take holidays in March
- Sickness
 - Sickness had reduced by 35% - over 500 days
 - Most people would rather not have a sickness record
 - Staff could leave early or come in late if they felt unwell, which helped manage chronic conditions
 - Easier to get doctors appointments
 - Some were walking or cycling to work, going to the gym

The scheme had been introduced in the Housing Benefit department and on the strength of its success it had been rolled out to three other departments with some minor adaption's.

Key elements of the extended scheme piloted by Housing, Taxation and Xentrall were as followed:

Band Width - 7am-7pm
 Core Time - None
 Carry Forward - 10 hours
 Debit Time - 10 hours
 Break Periods - Up to 3
 Number of Flexi Days - 2 x full/4 x half days
 Maximum Flexi Days per annum - 13 days
 Carry Forward Leave/ Pre Draw Leave - Up to 5 days

Upon completion of the extended pilot, the scheme would be reviewed with a view to rolling out the scheme across the Council where feasible.

Due to the findings of the initial pilot it was considered that the Flexible Working scheme would have a significant effect on sickness absence.

CONCLUDED that the report be noted.