

Corporate, Adult Services & Social Inclusion Select Committee

A meeting of Corporate, Adult Services & Social Inclusion Select Committee was held on Tuesday, 19th January, 2010.

Present: Cllr Mick Stoker (Chairman), Cllr Mrs Lynne Apedaile, Cllr Aidan Cockerill, Cllr Mrs Suzanne Fletcher, Cllr Miss Tina Large, Cllr Roy Rix

Officers: Mrs B Brown, Mrs L King (PPC); Mrs J Danks, Mrs D Hurwood, Mrs J Spittle (R); I Miles (Xentrall); Mrs T Harrison, Mrs J Trainer, Mrs M Waggott (LD)

Also in attendance: Cllr David Coleman (Cabinet Member for Access and Communities), Cllr Terry Laing (Cabinet Member for Corporate Management and Finance)

Apologies: Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell

1 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

2 **Minutes of the meeting held on 27th October 2009.**

Members considered the draft minutes of the meeting held on 27th October 2009.

CONCLUDED that the draft minutes of the meeting held on 27th October 2009 be agreed as a correct record and be forwarded on to council for consideration.

3 **Corporate Management and Finance and Access and Communities Overview**

Members were provided with reports from Heads of Service Resources, Xentrall, Law & Democracy and Policy, Performance & Communications. The reports gave an overview of what the service areas had achieved, what had proved more difficult and emerging issues.

The Head of Democratic Services presented an overview of Democratic Services, Electoral Services, Community Engagement, Civic and Scrutiny.

Democratic Services

Members noted the progress that had been made by Electoral Services and professional way in which the service was run. Members also highlighted the exemplary service provided by all Democratic Services staff.

Members discussed the merits of the various programmes and packages promoted by Members Development and ICT Members' Support.

Members also discussed concerns relating to e-petition schemes but noted that this was a statutory requirement.

Resources

Discussion took place regarding sickness absence and Members requested details of savings as a result of the work undertaken to reduce sickness absence.

Members observed that the flexible working arrangement had proved a success for most employees. However, not all service areas had been able to take full advantage of the scheme.

Members questioned their exclusion from the policy prohibiting Council employees from consuming alcohol during working hours. Officers advised that elected Members were not Council employees and therefore the exclusion did not apply to them. However, Members could voluntarily choose to abide by the policy or give consideration to extending the scheme to Members.

Members discussed the recent proposals relating to travel allowances and suggested that Council wide issues would benefit from wider Member discussion/ consultation at an earlier stage.

In response to Members queries, Officers advised that the service had organised several events aimed at improving recruitment amongst BME groups. A recent event had been attended by 150 people and as a result a diversity group had been formed.

A query was raised regarding the progress of the volunteering policy and Members were advised that an outline policy had been drafted. Members requested further feedback on the policy.

Members referred to recent communications with Members during the recent bad weather conditions. Officers acknowledged communications with Members could have been better and that this had now been addressed for the future.

CONCLUDED that:

1. The reports be noted.

2. Officers provide feedback to Members on savings from the reduction in sickness absence and the progress of the volunteering policy.

4 Action Plan - Communication, Consultation and Engagement Review

Members considered the action plan for the Communication, Consultation and Engagement Review.

In response to an enquiry as to whether redundancies would result from the review, Members were advised that there had been no redundancies at this stage arising from establishment of a central communications team. However, no assurances could be given that there would be no redundancies on implementation of all of the review recommendations.

CONCLUDED that the action plan be agreed.

5 Quarterly Progress Update on Previously Agreed Recommendations

Members considered the assessment of progress in relation to the previously agreed recommendations for the reviews of Corporate Consultation and Meeting Venues.

Members queried progress in relation to telephone conferencing and were advised that the product that Stockton Council had wished to use had been discontinued and therefore other products were being investigated.

Members asked the Head of Democratic Services to investigate level of interest amongst Members for telephone conferencing.

CONCLUDED that the assessment of progress contained in the reports be agreed.