

## **AGENDA ITEM**

### **CORPORATE, ADULT SERVICES & SOCIAL INCLUSION SELECT COMMITTEE**

**15 MARCH 2011**

#### **REVIEW OF WORK MAY 2007 – MAY 2011**

##### **Summary**

This report presents to Members a summary of the reviews that have been carried out in the Municipal Years 2007/8 – 2010/11 and highlights the key outcomes and impact of these reviews.

##### **Scrutiny Review of Theatre Subsidy**

###### **Scope**

The Committee carried out a Scrutiny Review of Theatre Subsidy between June and October 2007. The main aim of the review was to establish whether the subsidy from the Council represented value for money.

Overall the Committee concluded that the current subsidy level represented value for money and that the current contractor had achieved a balanced programme of entertainment. However, the Committee felt that there was room to develop and improve the programme offer.

The Committee acknowledged that the uncertainty regarding the future of the Forum Building and the short term extensions of the contract had created difficulties for the present contractor in booking shows and also made it difficult for the Council to work with the contractor to influence longer term improvements and a strategy for the management of the theatre. The Committee also acknowledged that inclusion of Tees Active into the Agreement had changed the contractual environment and there was a need to recognise this in any future contract.

###### **Key Outcomes/Impact**

- Billingham Forum is now under redevelopment and due to reopen in 2011.
- The contract negotiated built in a requirement to have a strategy for programme and audience development in place.
- The contract also includes a clause for the Council's annual approval of an outlined programme and audience development plan.

##### **Scrutiny Review of Voluntary & Community Sector**

###### **Scope**

A Task and Finish Group of the Committee's Members was appointed in 2008 to review several issues affecting the Voluntary and Community Sector within the Borough, including Core Funding, volunteering, and governance issues.

## **Findings**

The Group noted that there was an increasing emphasis towards engaging with the sector in order to jointly deliver services and contribute further towards local decision making. It was also recognised that various challenges existed for the sector to cope with and the Group believed that the Council should continue to assist when appropriate, including the need to value volunteering and assistance with procurement, in conjunction with relevant partners. The Group were satisfied that all core funded organisations contributed in some way to the aims of the Councils Community Strategy.

## **Key Outcomes/Impact**

- Core funded organisations provided statements regarding the training and support they provided for volunteers as requested.
- Viva Volunteers was established, with some investment from the Community Development Team, as well as from other funding streams and organisation, to offer a volunteer bureau service linking those who wish to volunteer with organisations seeking volunteers.
- Subsequently to the Select Committee report, in 2010 Cabinet agreed that the approach to voluntary sector funding move away from a number of core funded organisations to a third sector investment fund scheme.
- A Scrutiny Review of Outside Bodies also took place in 2010 and the outcome of the review will strengthen the governance issues with Members appointments to and reporting back from VCS organisations.

## **Lead Officer Comments**

Viva Volunteers operating successfully - 630 volunteers engaged of whom 141 are at the application stage, 102 are working towards finding a suitable placement whilst 107 volunteers are matched and actively contributing.

First round of investment fund closed - £86,000 awarded to 9 organisations. Second round open for EOI in June.

Wider package of support for the VCS developed including development of the Community Fund shortly to be released (April 2011) and 'Bid bank' providing range of information and intelligence VCS organisations can use in funding bids

## **Scrutiny Review of Older People's Strategy**

### **Scope**

In 2008/9 the Committee reviewed the 'direction of travel' taken by the Older People Strategy. The strategy had been approved by Council in January 2008, covered a period of 2007 – 2025, and aimed to ensure that longer term changes affecting the population of Stockton and its older people in particular, were taken into account by those designing and providing services. The Committee's review examined how those service groups, partners and stakeholders that contributed to the Action Plan for the strategy were performing, whether services were making provision within their service planning to address the changing needs of an ageing population, and whether any new initiatives could be undertaken that would add value to the Older People Strategy.

## **Findings**

The Committee acknowledged the significant progress being made against the Older Peoples' Action Plan by the Council and key partners reporting to the Renaissance Board. The Committee concluded that the Council should continue to develop its partnership approach to provide support for older people in the Borough through future service planning. The Committee also recognised the wide range of initiatives and services available to older people and the Committee's recommendations sought to promote these and utilize opportunities.

## **Key Outcomes/Impact**

- Improved co-ordination and partnership working.
- The appointment of an Older People's Champion.
- Promotion of Beware the Bogeyman and No Cold Calling Zones - since January 2009 64 No Cold Calling Zones and 8 Doorstep Crime Watch Zones have been approved and 2823 information packs have been delivered to residents.
- A Readers Group has been established to assess the readability of the Councils publications, and the Group have already been consulted on 'Care Services for Adults Explained' and 'Disabled Facilities Grant Introduction' among others.
- The Older People's Strategy is now in the process of being refreshed.
- The review was used as a case study in the Centre of Public Scrutiny's 'A Good Place to Grow Older? Practice Guide for Overview and Scrutiny Committees'

## **EIT Review of Communication, Consultation and Engagement**

### **Scope**

Between June and October 2009 the Committee carried out an Efficiency, Improvement and Transformation (EIT) Review which looked at how the Council were communicating, consulting and engaging with public, employees, councillors and partners.

### **Findings**

The recommendations from the review reflected a desire to implement a co-ordinated, strategic approach to communications and as well as delivering service improvements and estimated savings of £300,000 per annum.

### **Key Outcomes/Impact**

- A co-ordinated, strategic approach to communications
- Xentrall are providing the majority of design and print through the centralised service.
- Joint procurement of external advertising, print and design is being progressed through NEPO, and Stockton is leading on this project.
- A Communications Strategy is in place and has been agreed at Cabinet in November 2010.
- A new centralised Communication Team has been established and a centralised budget delivering £300,000 of savings each year. The savings made will be evidenced at the end of the municipal year by the team

delivering the service within budget. However, the team currently appear to be on budget.

- Improvements to internal communications have been a key outcome, particularly during a time of significant organisational change.

## **EIT Review of School Catering**

### **Scope**

The Committee's EIT Review of School Catering was presented to Cabinet on 17 February 2011. The review examined the provision of school lunches by the Stockton Borough Council's (SBC) catering service for 59 primary schools, one secondary school, and three special needs schools within the Borough.

### **Findings**

Although the service receives an income from the schools and from the parents of children it provides lunches to, this income does not cover the cost of the service and the Authority currently provides a subsidy. The Committee believed that by reviewing the staffing guide scales and allowances to increase efficiency and reducing the amount of added value work within each school, savings could be achieved to reduce the subsidy while still providing a quality service to the schools, and a healthy, nutritious meal to pupils. It is estimated that the savings that could be achieved in 2011/12 are £120,986, rising to £252,576 in 2012/13.

### **Key Outcome/Impact**

The Committee will receive an Action Plan outlining how the recommendations of the report will be implemented on 15 March 2011.

Potential savings from the review are £120,986 in 2011/12 rising to £252,576 in 2012/13.

### **Other Work Carried Out**

#### **EIT Task and Finish Reviews**

In November and December 2010 the Committee were presented the baseline information and final report of the following EIT Task and Finish Reviews:

- EIT Task and Finish Review of Customer Services and Taxation
- EIT Task and Finish Review of Human Resources

The Committee's comments on the final report of the above reviews were attached as an appendix to these reports when presented to Cabinet.

#### **Scrutiny Review Meeting Venues**

In March 2007 the Committee presented their review of Meeting Venues to Cabinet. The review aimed to reduce the pressure on corporate meeting venues and ensure consistency in the standard of the venues and facilities offered. Another objective of the review was to reduce reliance on external meeting venues. Although the review took place in the previous 4 year term, the Committee monitored the review throughout 2007 – 2011 and the following outcomes have been achieved:

- An accessible meeting room has been established on the ground floor of Municipal Buildings.
- Meeting room information is provided on the Council's intranet (including information on disabled access).
- The addition of departmental meeting rooms to the Outlook booking system to encourage the use of internal meeting rooms thereby reducing external meeting hire.
- Telephone conferencing is now in place, and approximately 76 conference calls have taken place between 1 April 2010 and 20 January 2011.
- A video conferencing solution is being implemented as part of a joint RIEP funded project with Redcar & Cleveland.