

Cabinet

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday, 2nd August, 2007.

Present: Cllr Ken Lupton(Chairman), Cllr Mrs Jennie Beaumont, Cllr Robert Cook, Cllr Alex Cunningham, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Mrs Mary Womphrey

Officers: G Garlick (CE); A Baxter (CESC); H Dean (PPC); I Miles (RES); J Allport (DNS); D Bond, M Henderson, S Johnson, G Birtle, J Trainer (LD); S Boyd (TRISTAR)

Also in attendance: Cllr Mrs Ann Cains, Cllr David Harrington, Cllr Ross Patterson, Cllr Mrs Maureen Rigg, Cllr Steve Walmsley

Apologies: Cllr Terry Laing

CAB 25/07

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Cunningham declared a personal non prejudicial interest in the item entitled Sustainable School Travel Strategy 2008 due to being a Governor of Westlands Primary School.

Councillors Mrs Womphrey and Mrs Beaumont declared personal non prejudicial interests in the item entitled Play Strategy 2007-2012 as they were Members of the Tees Active Board.

Councillor Cunningham declared a personal prejudicial interest in the item entitled Play Strategy 2007-2012 due to being a Governor of Westlands Primary School.

Councillor Nelson declared a personal non prejudicial interest in the item entitled Housing Futures and Revised Housing Capital Programme as he was a Member of the Tristar Homes Management Board.

CAB 26/07

Minutes of the meetings held on 7th June 2007 and 5th July 2007.

The minutes of the meetings held on 7th June 2007 and 5th July 2007 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CAB 27/07

Corporate Parenting - Select Committee Review

Members considered a report coming from the Children and Young People's Select Committee Review of Corporate Parenting.

It was explained that, at the outset of the Select Committee's review of Corporate Parenting it was made aware of the draft Corporate Parenting Strategy that was being developed and due to be presented at Cabinet prior to the conclusion of the Select Committee's work.

In order to assist the development and adoption of the strategy it was decided to undertake this review in two stages. The first stage therefore dealt with issues about the strategy whilst the second stage would report on the findings of partnership working and assist the preparation and response to the Joint Area Review and Comprehensive Performance Assessment process.

The Chairman of the Select Committee informed Cabinet that the Committee supported the implementation of the Corporate Parenting Strategy believing that it began to address the important aspects contained in Every Child Matters: Change for Children (2003) and The Children Act (2004) as well as the development of an approach to meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable children and young people in the borough.

The Chairman presented the specific recommendations of the Select Committee and made particular reference to a recommendation calling for all Cabinet and Council reports to contain a corporate parenting implications paragraph to ensure that consideration was given to looked after children's needs.

Cabinet thanked the Select Committee for its report and supported the recommendations apart from the specific wording of the recommendation relating to the introduction of a corporate parenting implications paragraph on Cabinet and Council reports. Cabinet agreed with the principle of the recommendation and appreciated the intention to highlight and maintain awareness of the Council's responsibilities in this area, however Members were concerned that, to include the paragraph on all reports would create avoidable work for officers and would potentially over complicate and unnecessarily lengthen reports.

In view of this revised form of wording was suggested. Members of Cabinet and the Chairman of the Select Committee supported the revision.

RECOMMENDED to Council that:-

1. at the beginning of each municipal year, at the first Council meeting, all councillors should publicly sign up to the Council pledge accepting their corporate parenting role.
2. each of the political groups within Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council should nominate a corporate parenting champion to be the Lead Member from their group on the Multi Agency Looked After Partnership (MALAP).

RESOLVED that:

3. all reports to Cabinet and Council, appertaining to Children and Young People issues, and any other appropriate reports, should contain corporate parenting implications presented in a similar way to financial, legal and community safety implications, to ensure consideration is given to looked after children's needs.
4. at the beginning of each school year all school governing bodies should sign up to the Council pledge accepting their corporate parenting role.

**CAB
28/07**

Sustainable School Travel Strategy 2008

Members noted that current school transport legislation had been framed in 1944, and provided a guarantee of home to school transport for only a small minority of pupils – those of compulsory school age attending their nearest suitable school where this was beyond 'statutory walking distance'.

Evidence showed that a lack of transport and the cost of transport could both act as a barrier to choice. The result was that there was a real inequity in how far children were able to travel to school. More affluent children travelled on average nearly half a mile further than the poorest, with only 10% of children entitled to free school meals travelling 3 or more miles to school compared to 18% of children not entitled to free school meals. The government aimed to remove the lack of affordable transport as a barrier to choice.

It was explained that Section 6 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 placed a general duty on Local Authorities (LAs) to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport and to produce a Sustainable School Travel Strategy annually.

There were 4 main elements to the duty:-

- an assessment of the travel and transport needs of children, and young people within the LAs area;
- an audit of the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within the authority that may be used when travelling to and from, or between schools/institutions;
- a strategy to develop the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within the authority so that the travel and transport needs of children and young people are better catered for; and
- the promotion of sustainable travel and transport modes on the journey to, from, and between schools and other institutions.

The Act defined sustainable modes of travel as those that the Council considered may improve the physical well-being of those who used them, the environmental well-being of all or part of the Council's area, or a combination of the two. For example, walking and cycling were likely to improve the health of those travelling on foot or by bicycle, and may well bring environmental benefits from reduced levels of congestion and pollution. Similarly, bus use or car sharing might be considered to bring environmental benefits in comparison to individuals travelling by car.

Members were provided with a copy of the Sustainable School Travel Strategy. The information within the Strategy document had been drawn from existing plans within Children Education and Social Care (CESC) and Development and Neighbourhood Services (DNS), the Local Transport Plan and policies already approved by Cabinet. Members were also provided with an Action Plan, which would be developed to include targets for the next 4 years.

The Council was required to publish the Sustainable School Travel Strategy, alongside other policies in respect of home to school transport and special needs transport so that they were available when parents applied for secondary school places for their children by August 2007 and each subsequent year.

Members noted that the Department for Children, Schools and Families had provided funding through the Standards Fund Grant No. 31/601 – General Duty

to Promote Sustainable Travel. The Council had been awarded £14,667 to undertake this work in 2007/08 and the same amount would be provided each year up to and including 2011/12.

It was proposed to commission this work to the Road Safety Team within Development and Neighbourhood Services. The team already manage the School Travel Plan data and would enable the funding to be used effectively in order to drive the Action Plan forward.

Cabinet noted that it was suggested that the Strategy should be referred to Executive Scrutiny for consideration and possible inclusion in a Select Committee's work programme.

Cabinet agreed the Strategy and supported its referral to Executive Scrutiny. Reference was made to School Travel Plans, which were mentioned in the Strategy and Cabinet suggested that as part of any future review the relevant Select Committee may wish to consider to what degree plans were implemented and how effective they were.

RESOLVED that

1. the Sustainable School Travel Strategy 2008, be approved.
2. refer the Strategy to Executive Scrutiny for consideration and possible inclusion in a Select Committee's work programme.'

**CAB
29/07**

Play Strategy 2007 - 2012

Cabinet considered a report that presented a draft Play Strategy for 2007 –2012 together with proposed schemes that would be contained within a big Lottery Bid.

It was explained that national guidance on the development of Play Strategies was published in 2006 to support local authorities and their partners in preparing strategies for improving children's play opportunities within the framework of a national policy.

The strategy had been developed by a multi-agency project team, which had met monthly to consider the content of the emerging document and associated action plan.

If the strategy was agreed, the intention was that a Play Partnership would be created to manage the action plan and to annually review the strategy. The Play Partnership would report to the Children's Trust Board

The overall aim of the strategy was to meet the play and learning needs of children and young people through the development of locally based, easily accessible play facilities across the borough of Stockton-on-Tees, both through the extension of existing provision and the development of new facilities. Play areas were integral to the strategy in the form of free imaginative space as well as more structured play environments. All provision should challenge children and young people whilst ensuring their safety. Where support was provided directly by staff employed either by the local authority or another organisation,

they would be appropriately trained and qualified for the roles undertaken.

When gaps in provision were identified, available resources would be utilised to reduce inequality of access for children and young people through the refocusing of mobile facilities and / or the securing of new funding opportunities.

This was to be achieved by encouraging increased partnership working where the ethos and culture of the principles of play were shared and services were provided in a manner that avoided duplication.

Cabinet noted that if the funding application to the Big Lottery Fund was successful, £488K would be available to the Borough to develop Play services and facilities. Proposed projects to receive money from a successful bid application were provided to Members.

It was explained that a further report on the Council's Play Area Strategy would be submitted to Cabinet shortly.

RESOLVED that

1. the Play Strategy 2007 – 2012 be approved.
2. the proposed schemes that would be contained within the big Lottery Bid be noted.
3. a further report detailing recommendations of the Council's Play Area strategy be presented to the next Cabinet.

Councillor Cunningham declared a personal prejudicial interest in the above item due to being a Governor of Westlands Primary School and took no part in the voting on this item.

**CAB
30/07**

Housing Futures and Revised Housing Capital Programme

Member considered a report that sought approval to undertake a comprehensive option appraisal of the Council's housing stock and in view of this to review the Tristar managed capital programme in line with existing resources.

Cabinet was provided with background to the establishment of the Council's Arms Length Management Organisation and the benefits this had provided.

Members were also provided with details of current issues relating to the Council's Housing Stock and tenant expectation.

It was explained that as more and more stock condition information was gathered, works which were not classed as decent standard but nevertheless were urgent works such as replacement lifts, emergency lighting and smoke alarms in multi storey blocks had emerged. This had created significant additional financial pressure as some of the works required completion within the next couple of years therefore reducing the resources the Council had available for decent standard plus works.

Members were provided with the basic decent standard definition. It was noted that in Stockton the Council had historically been enhancing the decent standard works providing in most cases new bathrooms and kitchens and replacement heating. With limited resources the Council would only be able to carry out basic decent standard works hence the need to explore other options with some urgency.

Any future option would need to consider funding decent standard plus works as a priority to ensure all tenants received equal levels of improvements to their home. Prudential borrowing had been considered as a means of continuing to carry out decent standard plus works but the Council could not borrow with a view to paying back in the long term until it was clear about the results of the option appraisal. However prudential borrowing in the short term would be beneficial to the council as it allowed the Council to accelerate the basic decent standard works so that the majority of remaining work was carried out in the current financial year thus saving overheads for the period 2008/09.

On the basis of the above information the Council had been working with Tristar Homes Limited (THL) to reprofile the Tristar managed housing capital programme over the next two years. At Cabinet on the 22nd February members approved an overall capital programme for the next three years. Members were now being asked to approve a revised two-year programme. The reason it was a two year programme not a three year was to reflect the period it was anticipated it would take to move forward the option appraisal and resulting conclusions in full consultation with tenants. Until the chosen option was in place it was not prudent to plan a capital programme beyond 2009 as available resources could not be anticipated.

Members noted that the Council had been working with Partners to accelerate the basic decent standard programme and save on costs. This would result in the majority of decent standard works to the remaining circa 2000 properties being completed in the financial year 2007/08. The revised Tristar managed element of the housing capital programme was provided for Members' attention. The retained housing capital programme remained as it was approved in the 22nd February Cabinet Report.

Looking to the future while the establishment of THL had ensured significant inward investment, improved property condition and management of the housing stock it was now timely to consider the growing financial pressures we face as tenant aspirations have increased and we need to ensure we can respond to changing local and national issues.

Giving due regard to these issues it was proposed that a future Option Appraisal was undertaken, in conjunction with THL and involving detailed consultation with tenants and all key stakeholders. The purpose of this exercise would be to appraise and evaluate potential investment options and ensure the Council was in a position to respond positively to the issues referred to above.

Members noted the current options available:-

- Transfer of the Housing Stock to an RSL
- Private Finance Initiative (PFI)
- Staying as we are (no change)

- Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Self Funding Model
- Regeneration special purpose vehicle.

As with the previous option appraisal it was essential that the options identified above be judged against a number of pre-determined criteria. Members were asked to endorse the following draft objectives:

Objective 1: Secure appropriate investment to fund property and external environmental investment works.

- Physical stock improvements, stock remodelling, the external environment and future proofing.

Objective 2: Regenerate and rejuvenate our neighbourhoods (deliver sustainable communities).

Objective 3: Meet the housing needs of the Borough (improve and increase the supply of affordable housing options for our tenants and residents).

- Increase the supply of affordable housing, broaden the scope for mixed tenure estates and deliver a range on intermediate tenure options.

Objective 4: Meet key national and local agendas

- Social inclusion, economic regeneration and the 'green' agenda.

It was explained that a series of consultation events would be held with tenants and Members to develop and finalise these draft objectives.

Following approval by Members a number of initial steps would be taken to commence the option appraisal process:

- Appointment of a Project Team: it was proposed that 3 Officers from the Housing Service be seconded to deliver the option appraisal (a Project Manager, Project Officer and Administration Officer). These Officers recently delivered the successful Small Scale Stock Transfer of sheltered housing and therefore have experience of the option appraisal process. This team would report directly to the Head of Housing.

- Appointment of an Independent Tenant Advisor (ITA) – Option Appraisal Guidance clearly stated that tenants must have a meaningful role during this process and should take ownership of the conclusions. Tenants were expected to be supported by ITA throughout the process.

- A Member seminar to be arranged for early September 2007 to discuss and firm up the optional appraisal objectives.

- Establishment of a Housing Futures Group (tenants and leaseholders) to commence the consultation of the draft objectives and the evaluation of potential options.

- Following the evaluation of the potential investment options a further report be made to Members detailing the appraisal process and preferred investment option.

RECOMMENDED to Council that

1. short-term prudential borrowing of £5.5 million is secured to move resources across financial years to ensure early completion of decent standard works thereby saving overheads.

RESOLVED that:-

2. the proposal to undertake an option appraisal of all council owned housing as detailed in the report considered, be endorsed.

3. the draft objectives as detailed within the body of the report be endorsed, to be followed by detailed consultation with all Members and tenants/leaseholders.

4. the establishment of a Tenant Housing Futures Group be endorsed.

5. delegated authority be given to the Corporate Director of Development and Neighbourhood Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Community Safety to sign-off the objectives following a Member seminar and consultation with tenants and leaseholders.

6. the appointment of the Project Team to deliver the option appraisal process be supported.

7. the appointment of an Independent Tenant Advisor be supported.

8. a further report be brought back to Cabinet following completion of the option appraisal progress outlining key findings and the preferred investment options (measured against the pre-determined objectives).

9. the impact of the option appraisal on available capital funding be noted and the revised 2007/08 and 2008/09 Tristar managed capital programme be approved.

10. that expressions of interest may be submitted to CLG relating to the identified options available.

**CAB
31/07** **Minutes of Various Bodies**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meetings of the Area Partnership Boards.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the following Area Partnership Boards be received/approved, as appropriate:-

Western Area Partnership Board – 21st May 2007
Billingham Area Partnership Board – 14th May 2007
Billingham Area Partnership Board – 4th June 2007
Eastern Area Partnership Board – 5th June 2007

**CAB
32/07** **Computer Room Location**

It was explained that the purpose of the report was to seek approval to proceed with the procurement process which was required to begin preparations for

relocating the computer room in light of the on-going problems with the existing facility in Municipal Buildings. The report also described the influencing factors that the Stockton Darlington Partnership had on the location decisions.

It was noted that there were on-going problems with the existing computer room in Municipal Buildings and that there was a need to relocate the facility. In February 2007 Cabinet approved funds for the fit-out of a new computer room as part of the review of the Medium Term Financial Plan and 2007/8 Budget. Also in February 2007 a progress report on the Stockton Darlington Partnership highlighted the location of the computer room as a key feature of the work being undertaken to assess suitable locations for the services included in the Partnership proposal across both Boroughs.

It was explained that work on identifying a suitable alternative computer room location had had to be mindful of the potential partnering with Darlington Borough Council. Should the Partnership proceed, then a joint computer room was planned which would host both Stockton and Darlington's ICT systems. Consequently, the Property Sections and ICT of both Authorities had worked together in identifying and reviewing suitable properties both from within the existing Authority portfolios and from what was available in the private sector and with other Authorities. It was noted that external assistance had also been sought in outlining the requirements of a modern day facility.

Members were advised that the on-going risks associated with the existing room had meant that the property search and the selection of a location had had to run in advance of the approval for the Stockton Darlington Partnership.

It was explained that a number of space and technical requirements were defined for the new computer room as its location was a key factor in deciding the location of the other proposed partnership services. Another factor taken into account was the eventual location of the ICT staff. Although ideally they would be next to the computer room, the two could be split so long as the travelling time for staff visiting the room was not too great so as to cause operational problems for the ICT Service. Another factor taken into account was the need to ideally place the new room close to one of the existing network cores of either Stockton (Municipal Buildings) or Darlington (Town Hall), as this would save significant costs of providing high speed resilient network links to both Authorities as opposed to just one. It was noted that it would also save the alternative approach of moving all the existing network links to the new room, which again was an expensive option.

Members considered an initial list of properties and options and the reasons why they were discounted.

Members also considered a summary of a further detailed investigation which was undertaken on properties which looked a more suitable option.

Having considered the options Cabinet noted that the most viable location would be the empty ground floor area within Darlington Town Hall. This was based upon factors such as cost, security, specification, timescales and accessibility. It was explained that although a project plan was currently being developed, it was anticipated that the new room would be commissioned during the Spring of 2008. It was noted that the risk of the Partnership not receiving

approval was mitigated by the fact that the specification and tendering for the build and fit-out of the computer room would complete around the same time as the Partnership Cabinet report in October. Therefore, if the Partnership was approved, the tender would be awarded and a head start on the process would have been gained. If the Partnership was not approved, a revised property search would take place at that time and where possible, the results of the tender process would be applied to the new location. It was noted that due to the specialist nature of a new computer room, external assistance would be used to develop a detailed specification and also to build the facility.

It was explained that in being remote to the network core in Municipal Buildings, Stockton's ICT services would be provided by two high-speed network links from Darlington Town Hall to Municipal Buildings in Stockton. Each individual link would be capable of handling the Authority's network traffic and therefore two would be used to provide resilience to the ICT services.

Members were advised that should there be a need for Darlington Borough Council to vacate the Town Hall premises within the planned initial ten years of the Partnership, a clause would be written into the Partnership agreement stating that Darlington Borough Council would underwrite the costs of a future move of the computer room, should this be necessary.

RESOLVED that the start of the procurement process associated with the relocation of the existing computer room be approved.

**CAB
33/07** **Corporate Parenting Strategy**

Members considered a report that proposed a series of actions which should improve the quality of corporate parenting and impact positively on outcomes for looked after children and young people in Stockton.

Cabinet noted that the principle of corporate parenting had been first encapsulated in the "Quality Protects" programme. The Quality Protects Programme was about improving the well-being and life chances of those children who were looked after by local authorities. As part of that programme, the Secretary of State for Health announced that:

"One of the aims of the Quality Protects programme is to assist councils to adopt a truly corporate outcome oriented approach to parenting children who are looked after by them and supporting the parenting of other children in need."

The roles of Council's Executive and Scrutiny functions were stipulated in the Department for Education and Skills publication, "If This Were My Child" in October 2003. (A Councillor's Guide to Being a Good Corporate Parent").

The White Paper 'Care Matters : Time for Change' 2007 highlighted the need to improve the role of the corporate parent by expecting every local authority to set out its pledge to children in care, to make clear that the DCS and lead member for Children's Services should be responsible for leading improvements in Corporate parenting and by introducing an annual stocktake of the outcomes for children in care.

The role of the corporate parent was to seek for children in public care the

outcomes that every good parent would want for their own children. Once a child was in care, all Members and Officers of the council, as their corporate parents, needed to be concerned about that child as if they were their own. This concern should encompass their education, their health and welfare, what they do in their leisure time and holidays, how they celebrate their culture and how they receive praise and encouragement for their achievements. This concern also extended to providing appropriate support once young people had left care to enable them to achieve independence in the community. This continued support should include looked after children's educational support post 16 years old.

Corporate parenting was a whole authority enterprise. It was not directed solely at those services targeted at children, but required all services across the Council to work together corporately and with partner agencies to achieve the best outcomes for their looked after children and care leavers.

Stockton's corporate parenting strategy had been developed at a time of unprecedented partnership activity with regard to responding to the needs of children, young people and their families. Meeting the needs of looked after children, as a particularly vulnerable group, was key to ensuring that the Council (Members & Officers) and its partners could respond effectively to their needs. It would also support meeting two of the Council's corporate priorities, Promoting Achievement and Tackling Disadvantage.

This strategy outlined how Stockton Borough Council and partners would meet and address its corporate parenting responsibilities and improve the outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. The strategy would be reviewed annually in August.

The Corporate Parenting Strategy used the "Every Child Matters" outcomes framework as a vehicle for identifying what needed to be done and the progress the Council and its partners were making in improving the life chances and outcomes for looked after children. These outcomes would enable organisations and stakeholders to reflect on the actions and work necessary to bring about improvements in the lives of all children in the context of that Framework.

It was explained that the strategy built on the Council's corporate parenting pledge. The pledge outlined and formed an undertaking and commitment from the Council to the principles of corporate parenting.

"Every good parent knows that children require a safe and secure environment in which to thrive. We protect and support our children against the perils and risks of life. We are ambitious for them; we want them to reach their potential. We celebrate and share in their achievements. A child who is cared for by the Local Authority has the right to expect everything from a corporate parent that would be expected from a good parent.

As a Local Authority:

- we accept the responsibilities and challenges of being corporate parents;
- we are committed to providing efficient, effective and caring quality

services;

- we will creatively meet the needs of children and young people in public care and enable them to achieve their full potential.

We as elected members and employees within the borough being corporate parents, will take responsibility for working collaboratively to support children and young people in public care and care leavers to ensure we enable them to reach their potential emotionally, educationally, physically, psychologically and socially.

Above all, as Corporate Parents we will preface all our thinking, planning, actions and decisions with:

“If this were my child I would”

Members noted that the strategy outlined the Council’s shared understanding of corporate parenting and clarified the ways in which Officers and Councillors would work together to discharge their corporate parenting duties, aligned to the 5 outcomes of the Every Child Matters Framework.

The strategy included key areas for development and an overview of action plans collated from across the range of services and partners providing services for Looked After Children (LAC). The plans informed a monitoring schedule which formed the basis of one of the Multi Agency Looked After Partnership (MALAP) group’s workstreams. It was proposed that MALAP report this monitoring through to the Children’s Trust Board as a standing agenda item.

It was explained that two groups met to discharge a monitoring role in respect of provision of services for LAC. The MALAP, whose membership was predominantly Council Officers, colleagues from partner agencies and recently two self nominated Councillors. In addition an informal Corporate Parenting group, open to all Councillors, met. It was proposed to join these groups together, and increase the accountability of the MALAP, by revising membership to include Senior Officers and by requiring Councillors to join as names with an expectation to report back to Party colleagues. Terms of reference had been prepared for a re-formed MALAP and an Advisory Group of children and young people was being developed to work alongside this group to shape decision making and service design.

The Children Act 2004 gave local authorities the duty to make arrangements for local co-operation, which would include integrated planning, commissioning and delivery of children’s services. From 2006 local areas had been required to use Children’s Trust arrangements to deliver integrated Children’s Services.

The development of a Corporate Parenting approach to meeting the needs of some of our most vulnerable children and young people sat well within this vision of service development and delivery.

Members commended the Strategy, Statement and Action Plan and supported their approval. During discussion reference was made to the MALAP proposed Terms of Reference and monitoring of attendance. It was agreed that where this related to Members non attendance should be reported to the Leader and

appropriate group Leader.

Members agreed that a recommendation in this report, relating to inclusion of a Corporate Parenting Implications paragraph in future Council reports should be amended to reflect discussion held during consideration of the Select Committee report on Corporate Parenting.

RECOMMENDED to Council that

1. the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Corporate Parenting Statement be ratified with the aim of implementation as Council policy in Autumn.
2. the proposal to include the MALAP in the list of groups requiring named Councillor membership be approved.

RESOLVED that

3. the proposal that MALAP report to Children's Trust Board as a standing agenda item and subsequently to Cabinet be approved.
4. all reports to Cabinet and Council, appertaining to Children and Young People issues, and any other appropriate reports, should contain corporate parenting implications presented in a similar way to financial, legal and community safety implications, to ensure consideration is given to looked after children's needs.

**CAB
34/07**

Children and Young People's Plan 2007 - 2010

Members considered a report that presented the Children and Young People's Plan 2007-10. It was explained that the Children and Young People's Plan, 2007-10 had been developed following extensive consultation with partner agencies and organisations, with inputs from children and young people, parents and carers through the course of this last year. It was noted that it was an ongoing process and linked back to the development of the first plan, which covered the period 2006-09. Members were provided with a copy of the plan.

It was explained that the plan was to continue as a three year rolling plan, in that it would be reviewed and updated each year. This meant that some priorities would remain, if they were long-term issues, but some would change, if they had been tackled and resolved within the year. It set the vision and key priorities for the Children's Trust Board and identified key actions to be taken to address these priorities. It was noted that the action plan would be updated and improved each year to reflect changing activities and feedback on how helpful it was.

Members were advised that the range of appendices had not been attached at this stage. They were extensive and the action plan in particular was still being developed following the completion of the review process. These would be made available for information to all members prior to Council's consideration of the plan.

It was explained that The Children's Trust Board, at its meeting on 20th June, 2007 received the draft plan and had recommended its approval to Cabinet and

full Council. The Council was the responsible body for signing off the Children and Young People's Plan. It had been submitted to Ofsted as part of the Annual Performance Assessment of Children's Services.

It was noted that The Children's Trust Board was recommending the approval of the plan to all partner organisations and agencies.

Members were advised that the Annual Performance Assessment of children's services formed part of the Children and Young People's Plan and would be available as an appendix to the plan. The assessment was completed and returned to Ofsted on 14th June. Members were advised of the self assessed scores and these were as follows;

Be Healthy – 3
Stay Safe – 4
Enjoy and Achieve – 4
Make a Positive Contribution – 4
Achieve Economic Wellbeing – 4
Service Management – 4

It was explained that the scoring system was 1-4 with 4 being the top score. 4 represented services which were outstanding and delivering well above minimum requirements for users. 3 represented services which were good and consistently delivering above minimum requirements for users. The score for the Be Healthy outcome was not assessed as a 4 primarily because of the performance on the number of teenage conceptions. Although there had been an improvement in the most recent counting year (2005), the target of a 50% reduction on the baseline figure set in 1998 remained challenging. It was noted that there was oversight of this by Government Office North East and they had commented positively on the present action plan which had been set by the Teenage Pregnancy Partnership to address this.

RECOMMENDED to Council that:-

The Children and Young People's Plan 2007-10 be approved.

**CAB
35/07** **Annual Report of the Standards Committee - 2006/07**

Members considered a report relating to the Standards Committee's Annual Report for 2006/07. The Chairman of the Standards Committee, Mr Francis Hayes, was in attendance to present the report and answer any questions about the work the Committee had undertaken.

It was noted that the production of annual reports was an essential part of the Council's performance monitoring, reporting and planning procedures. Monitoring, planning and reviewing the work of the Standards Committee should equally therefore include an annual reporting process as best practice.

Members were provided with the Committee's second Annual Report for 2006/2007.

It was explained that the purpose of the Report was not only to provide an overview of the work of the Committee in the past year, but also to identify and

promote examples of best practice and to provide an opportunity to review and learn from experience. The Report therefore set out the Committee's Statutory responsibilities, summarised how those duties had been discharged during 2006/07 and drew attention to those issues that would require attention in the year ahead.

Members were advised that consultation on the Report had previously taken place with the relevant Cabinet Member; the Head of Legal Services as Deputy Monitoring Officer; the Head of Democratic Services; the Corporate Governance Group; the Corporate Management Team; and the Audit Committee. It was noted that the Report would also be placed on the intranet and the internet for the attention of all Members/Officers. A hard copy would, in addition be made available to each member of the Standards Committee.

RECOMMENDED to Council that:-

The Standards Committee's Annual Report be approved.

**CAB
36/07**

Report of the Local Government Ombudsman

Members considered a report that provided an update on the position with regard to a finding of maladministration by the Local Government Ombudsman.

It was noted that the Cabinet considered a report on the 1 February 2007 concerning a finding of maladministration for failing to handle nuisance caused by drifting car wash spray. A recommendation was then made to Council to offer a sum of £1,000 for the Council's failure to impose a planning condition to control spray drift from the car and jet wash, together with a sum of £250 for the time and trouble in pursuing the complaint. The recommendation was accepted at a special meeting of Council held on 28 March 2007.

It was explained that as a result of the Council's decision the Local Government Ombudsman was minded to issue a further Report since the Council had not accepted her suggested remedy. However, before issuing a further Report she requested a meeting with the Chief Executive and relevant Officers. Members were advised that the meeting took place on 18 May 2007 and it was agreed that Officers would further recommend to Cabinet that a payment of £10,000 was to be made to the Complainant.

It was noted that whilst the earlier offer of compensation was considered appropriate, the Complainant and other neighbouring properties had continued to complain about alleged nuisance. The Ombudsman had also maintained the view that there had been a significant loss of amenity to the Complainant, particularly since the Council had been unable to negotiate with the garage owner to provide a permanent physical solution to the problem.

It was explained that if the Council was willing to increase its offer of compensation to £10,000, the Ombudsman had confirmed that she would not publish a further report and would not require the Council to instruct the District Valuer to advise on whether the Complainant's property had been devalued as a result of spray drift. Officers therefore considered this to be an acceptable way forward.

RECOMMENDED to Council that:-

The Council's earlier offer of compensation to the Complainant is revised and replaced with an offer of £10,000 (ten thousand pounds) in full and final settlement of the complaint.