

# Council

A meeting of Council was held on Wednesday, 26th March, 2008.

**Present:** The Worshipful the Mayor (Cllr Bill Noble), Cllr Hilary Aggio, Cllr Mrs Lynne Apedaile, Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Mrs Jennie Beaumont, Cllr Phillip Broughton, Cllr Mrs Ann Cains, Cllr Dick Cains, Cllr Aidan Cockerill, Cllr David Coleman, Cllr Robert Cook, Cllr Alex Cunningham, Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr Mick Eddy, Cllr Kevin Faulks, Cllr John Fletcher, Cllr Mrs Suzanne Fletcher, Cllr Maurice Frankland, Cllr Robert Gibson, Cllr David Harrington, Cllr Paul Kirton, Cllr Terry Laing, Cllr Miss Tina Large, Cllr Colin Leckonby, Cllr Alan Lewis, Cllr Ken Lupton, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr Mrs Kath Nelson, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Maurice Perry, Cllr Mrs Maureen Rigg, Cllr Roy Rix, Cllr Julia Roberts, Cllr Michael Smith, Cllr Mick Stoker, Cllr Mrs Allison Trainer, Cllr Steve Walmsley, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Mrs Mary Womphrey, Cllr Mick Womphrey and Cllr Barry Woodhouse.

**Officers:** G Garlick, H Dean (CE); A Baxter, S Wilson (CESC); M Batty, S Daniels, P Diggins, M Robinson, N Schneider (DNS); P K Bell, J Grant M Waggott (LD); J Danks, M Wray (R).

**Also in attendance:** One Member of the Public.

**Apologies:** Cllr Paul Baker, Cllr Mrs Eileen Craggs, Cllr Jackie Earl, Cllr John Gardner, Cllr Miss Barbara Inman, Cllr Mohammed Javed, Cllr Andrew Larkin, Cllr Lee Narroway, Cllr Mrs Liz Nesbitt, Cllr Ross Patterson, Cllr Fred Salt, Cllr Andrew Sherris, Cllr Michael Womphrey and Cllr Bill Woodhead.

## **C Declarations of Interest**

**265/07**

There were no interests declared.

## **C Proposed Revision to Select Committee Structure and Terms of Reference**

**266/07**

At the meeting of Cabinet held on 13th March 2008, Members considered a report relating to a proposed revision to the Council's select committee structure and terms of reference.

As part of its discussions at a recent Away Day, the Executive Scrutiny Committee gave consideration to a number of Scrutiny Structure and Constitutional issues arising from its review of scrutiny activities over the past year; with a view to considering whether any improvements could be introduced into scrutiny arrangements for the future. Reference was made at the meeting to the existing terms of reference of the Executive Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees, as set out in Article 6 of the Council's Constitution.

Executive Scrutiny noted the inability of the Adult Services and Health Select Committee in being able to fulfil its responsibilities for the scrutiny of Adult Services as a result of its workload being taken up entirely in scrutinising local health issues and the health service. It was therefore felt that given the likely development of this workload in accordance with regulations under Section 7 of the Health & Social Care Act 2001 and Section 31 of the Health Act 1999, there was no alternative other than to request Council to consider amending the Constitution to allow scrutiny responsibility for Adult Services to be removed from the Adult Services & Health Select Committee and transferred to the remit of the Corporate and Social Inclusion Select Committee. It was felt that the broad remit of this Committee; together with its emphasis towards social inclusion, offered itself to be the most appropriate Committee for assuming this responsibility.

In addition, the Executive Scrutiny Committee also considered its

responsibilities to prioritise, develop and co-ordinate the scrutiny work programme, ensuring that there was efficient use of the Select Committees' time, whilst being mindful of the emerging corporate priorities. The Committee suggested that there was a need to introduce greater flexibility to allow Select Committees to respond to Council priorities where required, by extending their remits beyond their own thematic area so as to be in a position to be able to consider requests from the Executive Scrutiny Committee to carry out a scrutiny review of 'any other matter considered to be appropriate that reflects the corporate priorities'. This was considered especially important given the potentially increasing workload of Select Committees arising from new legislative requirements and referrals. A more flexible approach would help to create capacity within the work programme.

Cabinet considered a document that highlighted the effects of both of the proposals.

RESOLVED that:-

1. Scrutiny responsibility for Adult Services be removed from the Adult Services & Health Select Committee and be transferred to the remit of the Corporate and Social Inclusion Select Committee, and Article 6 of the Council's Constitution be amended accordingly.
2. The proposed extension of the remit of the Select Committees identified at Appendix 2 in the report to Cabinet be approved and Article 6 of the Council's Constitution be amended accordingly.

**C  
267/07      Local Development Framework: Revision of the Local Development Scheme and Update on the Employment Land Review Stage 2**

At the meeting of Cabinet held on 13th March 2008 Members considered a report relating to the Local Development Scheme and an update on the Employment Land Review Stage 2.

The Local Development Scheme was the project plan for the preparation of the documents that would comprise the Local Development Framework (LDF).

As part of the Annual Monitoring Report, the Council assessed its progress against the milestones identified in the LDS for the preparation of LDF documents and where there had been slippage, the LDS had to be revised accordingly. The revisions subsequently had to be agreed with Government Office for the North East (GO-NE) and the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) before the Council could formally adopt it.

Whilst progress since April 2007 had been good, it had become apparent that the timetable proposed in the Second Revised LDS (published in April 2007) could not be maintained and required revision.

The main changes would be:

- Core Strategy would be submitted in September instead of May 2008.

- Preferred Options for Regeneration Development Plan Document and Yarm and Eaglescliffe Area Action Plans would now be published in September instead of May 2008 consultation purposes.

- The Environment DPD Issues and Options report would be published for consultation in January 2009 instead of January 2008.

The Employment Land Review (ELR) was part of the evidence base for the LDF and would inform and support policies in the Core Strategy and Regeneration Development Plan Document (DPD).

The Council completed Stage 1 of the ELR in autumn 2006. In Spring 2006 Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (NLP) and Storeys: SSP (SSP) were appointed to undertake Stage 2. The work adopted a methodology advocated by a Communities and Local Government (CLG) guidance note and researched the local economy and the future employment land floorspace and land requirements.

Stage 2 of the study concluded that:

- For the LDF period (2007 – 21) Stockton Borough required 191.3 ha of employment land, an average take up of 13.6 ha per annum.

- For a 25 year supply 340.3 Ha of land was required. Given the time period of this projection this requirement was uncertain and would require monitoring.

Members noted that the above figures would be used within the Council's Core Strategy and would also be used in Stage 3 of the ELR which would identify which sites should be allocated, through the LDF, to meet employment land demand and provide for economic growth. Stage 3 of the ELR was expected to commence in the near future.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The revised timetable for the Local Development Framework as detailed in the Local Development Scheme be agreed.

2. Future amendments to the Local Development Scheme be delegated to the Head of Planning in consultation with the Chairperson of the Local Development Framework Members Steering Group.

3. The conclusions of the Employment Land Review Stage 2, which would be used as a basis for the development of employment policies in the LDF, be noted.

## **C 268/07 Council Plan and Service Improvement Plans 2008-2011**

Members considered a report that provided the draft Council Plan and Service Improvement Plans for 2008-2011. The Council Plan set out Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's key improvement priorities which contributed to the

Borough's Sustainable Community Strategy. The Council Plan was supported by Service Improvement Plans which provided more detail on how key objectives and priorities were met.

The Council Plan was based on the objectives and outcomes already set in the Sustainable Community Strategy, but provided focus on the key objectives needed to be achieved authority wide, and which needed to be monitored by Corporate Management Team and the Cabinet.

The principle underlying the development of the Council Plan was that it should be a business plan for the organisation, focusing on key corporate priorities for change, rather than summarising all activities that the Council undertakes. This approach was vital to ensure a clear focus on improvement, but meant that some significant service areas did not feature in the key objectives and outcomes. The focus of the plan shifted each year as the key improvement priorities altered over time; it was a three year rolling plan which was updated on an annual basis.

Service Improvement Plans supported the Council Plan by setting out how key priorities and objectives would be delivered, and their resource implications. The plans also included information about each service area and its achievements.

The 2008-2011 Council Plan contained two main parts. The first was a narrative explaining about the Borough, the Council, its achievements and future plans. This was supported by the second main part – an action plan which set out how the objectives and priorities of the Council would be delivered.

The objectives within the Council Plan had been updated following the development of the new Sustainable Community Strategy and consultation with local people and Councillors. The plan had been developed in partnership with:

- Councillors – through seminars on the budget and Council Plan and through “drop in” sessions for Members to discuss the plan with officers
- Corporate Management Team, Heads of Service and Policy Officers through joint working to develop the plan

As an ‘Excellent’ Council Stockton had the freedom to use its Council Plan to meet the statutory requirement to prepare a (Best Value) Performance Plan. This Council Plan therefore formed the Performance Plan for 2008/9. It would be supplemented by an annex of best value performance indicators information and targets to be published at the end of June, once this data was available.

In its guidance on performance plans, the DCLG specified the intended audiences of these documents:

- a. The primary audience should be the authority itself including elected members and officers
- b. The Government is a secondary audience, because the plans contain essential information enabling it to monitor performance

c. Although Performance Plans must be available to the public, the public were not intended to be the primary audience.

This was in line with Stockton's approach: to ensure that full copies of the plan were provided to members, managers and key partners and the Government. A summary version of the Council Plan was also prepared for all staff. The Council Plan would also be available in public places and copies could be provided to the public when requested: full and summary versions would also be available over the Internet.

This was the last year that Government would require a performance plan of this type (though the Council may continue to produce such a plan for its own use). The Local Government White Paper, "Strong and prosperous communities" and the ensuing Act introduced a number of changes to the national performance framework.

2008/09 would be a transitional year for Stockton as the new performance framework begins to be implemented. The new framework had the Local Area Agreement at its heart. The agreement which was being negotiated would consist of up to 35 measures which would form a performance contract between Stockton and the Government. These measures had to be chosen from a "menu" of 198 measures known as the National Indicator Set or NIS. The NIS was in development and Local Area Agreements would be submitted to government by 31st May 2008 to enable ministers to sign them off by the end of June 2008.

However, the measures that were likely to be included in the Local Area Agreement also needed to be included in the Council Plan to provide officers and members with a joined up local performance framework. At this stage the Council was able to indicate in the "success measures and outcomes" section of the action plans where there was likely to be a link to the Local Area Agreement and other measures in the NIS; but in most cases the Council was not able to provide targets as data was still being collected against emerging definitions and guidance and targets had yet to be negotiated with Government. Subject to Council's delegation of approval of the LAA to Cabinet, the draft agreement would be submitted to the May meeting of Cabinet before submission to government. Once targets were agreed, the Council Plan would need to be updated.

The service planning framework was reviewed in 2005 and a revised framework put into place to focus on changes and improvements and to bring service and resource (finance, human resources, ICT, procurement) planning closer together. SIPs include the key changes, improvements and priorities which would require significant attention from heads of service to deliver. Core business in each service was covered in business unit plans which sit beneath the SIPs.

The service improvement plans supported the Council Plan and Sustainable Community Strategy. Plans were structured to included:-

a. an introduction outlining the strategic direction of the service and key achievements from the previous year;

b. action plans linked to the eight themes of the Community Strategy and a theme of organisational development. The action plans included links to other plans, identify actions and milestones, responsible officers, success measures and targets, and risks. In addition where actions had resource implications these were identified.

c. The medium term financial plan for the service

d. A performance indicator table including both measures and targets.

Plans had been developed to cover all service areas. In some areas it had been sensible to develop combined SIPs covering more than one head of service's remit e.g. Children's Services. Performance against SIPs would be monitored and reported to Members twice a year, alongside Council Plan monitoring.

The abridged versions of the draft SIPs, focusing on key elements of the action plans were attached to the report. Full draft SIPs had been placed on the Intranet to enable Members to consider them in detail. Once agreed, plans would be published on cd-rom and on the intranet with a set of hard copy plans lodged in the members library.

Members were provided with presentations from the following service groupings on the content of their Service Improvement Plans 2008/2011 which represented a summary of their more detailed service delivery plans:-

Children, Education and Social Care  
Development and Neighbourhood Services  
Resources  
Law and Democracy  
Policy Performance and Communications

Members were given the opportunity to comment and ask questions on each of the above presentations.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The draft Council Plan and Service Improvement Plans for 2008 – 2011 be approved.

2. Approval of the Local Area Agreement 2008-11 and associated targets be delegated to Cabinet.