

## **Housing & Community Safety Select Committee**

A meeting of Housing & Community Safety Select Committee was held on Thursday, 16th July, 2009.

**Present:** Cllr Julia Cherrett (Vice Chairman), Cllr Robert Gibson, Cllr Mohammed Javed, Cllr Jean Kirby, Cllr Bill Noble, Cllr Bill Woodhead

**Officers:** Mike Batty, Dave Kitching (DNS) Sarah Whaley, Peter Mennear (LD)

**Also in attendance:**

**Apologies:** Cllr Mrs Allison Trainer, Cllr Jackie Earl, Cllr Mrs Liz Nesbitt

### **HCS 6/09      Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Mrs Cherrett declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item no.5 – Review of Neighbourhood Policing, Neighbourhood Watch, and CCTV as she was a member of the Tristar Management Board.

Councillor Gibson declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item no.5 – Review of Neighbourhood Policing, Neighbourhood Watch, and CCTV as he was a member of the Tristar Management Board.

Councillor Woodhead declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item no.5 - Review of Neighbourhood Policing, Neighbourhood Watch, and CCTV as he was a member of the Tristar Management Board.

Councillor Kirby declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item no.5 - Review of Neighbourhood Policing, Neighbourhood Watch, and CCTV as she was a member of a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme.

### **HCS 7/09      Minutes of the meetings held on 12th February 2009 and 27th February 2009**

Minutes of the meetings held on 12th February 2009 and 27th February 2009 were signed by the chair as a correct record.

### **HCS 8/09      Minutes of the meeting held on 12th March 2009**

Minutes of the meetings held on 12th March 2009 were signed by the chair as a correct record.

### **HCS 9/09      Minutes of the meeting dated 28th May 2009**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 28th May 2009.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 28th May 2009 be approved and forwarded to Council.

### **HCS 10/09      Monitoring of Previously Agreed Recommendations - Review of Neighbourhood Policing, Neighbourhood Watch, and CCTV - Action Plan**

Members were asked to consider the Action Plan setting out how the agreed recommendations from the review of Neighbourhood Policing, Neighbourhood Watch and CCTV would be implemented and agree target dates for completion.

It was agreed that the progress report for this review, would be brought back to the Committee on the 19th November 2009.

CONCLUDED that:

The Action Plan be agreed and the initial Progress report be received on 19th November as appropriate and as detailed above.

**HCS  
11/09**

## **Efficiency, Improvement and Transformation Review of Regulatory Services**

### **- Baseline information for Trading Standards and Licensing**

The Committee were asked to consider and challenge the baseline information for Trading Standards and Licensing, as part of the review of Regulatory Services.

The Head of Community Protection drew members attention to the budget summary on page 8 of the report and gave the committee a brief explanation of the joint arrangement to provide a Metrology Service with the four authorities that previously made up Cleveland County. The Committee learned that Stockton Borough Council had given notice to withdraw from the partnership and this had led to a review which resulted in greatly reduced expenditure.

Members queried whether trading standards could be provided by other types of organisations, and also discussed exploring the possibility of further joint arrangements with neighbouring authorities as had been done with the Metrology Lab and also Darlington and Stockton's sharing of back office services with the view of improving efficiencies and reducing further costs. It was also requested that a report be provided to the Committee highlighting the positives and negatives that these type of arrangements may produce for the Trading Standards function.

The Committee also asked the Head of Community Protection if there was any opportunities for additional income to be generated within the service. The Head of Community Protection gave members an insight into some of the work undertaken by the Consumer Advice Service. Where members of the public had complaints against traders, they were able to seek representation through Consumer Advice, and in many cases substantial redress had been secured. Currently this service was provided free to the public. A fee based principal could possibly be introduced via a prior contractual agreement so that the Council could secure a percentage of any financial redress that was obtained.

Other areas within the Service were also highlighted such as taxi licensing and general licensing. Members learned that the taxi licensing account was fully funded through the fees charged and any surplus/deficits in the account were managed through the level of fees. Surplus income generated from the general licensing account was used to fund administration support.

The Head of Community Protection had agreed to produce a consolidated breakdown of the budget for Trading Standards and Licensing in order to show the location of costs for the shared administration team. In addition it was requested that details of the cost of the management of the service be provided.

Members heard that Officers had requested information on benchmarking between licensing services. The Committee asked for research to be carried out where there maybe instances of any joint arrangements for licensing which have been entered into across other parts of the country and have resulted in a positive outcome, and that this be considered as part of the options for change. In addition to this it was also highlighted that Taxi Drivers had in the past queried the cost of a licence in Stockton and the Head of Community Protection stated that Stockton Borough Council were committed to examining this issue. The taxi trade had previously requested the ability to make representation with the scrutiny committee set up to examine taxi licence fees. As this was now being undertaken as part of the Regulatory Services review, Members agreed to attend an upcoming meeting between the trade and the Council.

The cost of deferred taxi licence reviews due to non-attendance by licensees was also discussed and it was agreed that information be provided to the Committee detailing how many of these cases are costing the authority each year.

CONCLUDED that:

The Committee note the information detailed in the baseline report, officers respond to requests for additional information as appropriate, and that the suggested options for change be considered at the next stage of the EIT process.

**HCS  
12/09**

**Work Programme  
- to review the work programme in respect of the current review**

The Scrutiny Officer presented the Committee with the Work Programme in respect of the current review and highlighted what the next items would be for review at the Committees forthcoming meetings.

CONCLUDED that:

The Scope and Project plan be noted.