

Housing & Community Safety Select Committee

A meeting of Housing & Community Safety Select Committee was held on Thursday, 24th February, 2011.

Present: Cllr Julia Cherrett, Cllr Jackie Earl, Cllr Robert Gibson, Cllr Mohammed Javed, Cllr Jean Kirby, Cllr Bill Noble, Cllr Bill Woodhead

Officers: Dave Kitching, Mike Chicken, Mike Batty(DNS), Sarah Whaley, Graham Birtle (LD)

Also in attendance:

Apologies: Cllr Mrs Nesbitt

HCS 45/10 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Mrs Cherrett declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item no.5 – Review of Work, 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 Work, 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 Work, as he was a member of the Tristar Management Board.

HCS 46/10 Minutes from the meeting dated the 21st October 2010 for signature.

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting which was held on the 21st October 2010 for signature.

CONCLUDED that the minutes were signed as a true record.

HCS 47/10 Draft minutes from the meeting which was held on the 13th January 2011

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting which was held on the 13th January 2011 for approval.

CONCLUDED that the minutes be approved.

HCS 48/10 Action Plan for Agreed Recommendations - Review of Taxi Licensing

Members were asked to consider the Action Plan setting out how the agreed recommendations from the Review of Taxi Licensing would be implemented and target dates for completion.

The Trading Standards and Licensing Manager introduced the Action Plan to the Committee which had been approved at Cabinet in November 2010.

Members learned that a consultation had been carried out and all licensed taxi drivers had been asked to complete a questionnaire asking for their preferred recommendations in relation to the attached Action Plan. The Trading

Standards and Licensing Manager informed the Committee that 76 drivers had responded, the majority of which had agreed with the recommendations as detailed at Appendix 2.

The Built & Natural Environment Manager drew the Committee's attention to the Action Plan detailing the request for a taxi rank at Thornaby Town Centre. Members heard that as Stockton Borough Council no longer owned any of the car parks in Thornaby Town Centre it was out of the authorities hands. Taxi proprietors were put in contact with the Thornaby Town Centre Manager and a number of them had negotiated an arrangement on their private road.

The Committee heard that a lengthy letter had been received from the drivers association which detailed their request to be able to use bus lanes, as the drivers themselves felt they should be considered as public transport providers as they were offering the same level of service. It was highlighted that currently this could have safety implications, not all taxi's were easily identifiable, counter flow and with flow routes had their own safety issues, and if taxi's were given permission to use bus lanes it would have to be all bus lanes not area specific no matter how the traffic flowed which could present some dangers.

It was agreed that a response to the drivers association would be prepared and brought back to this Committee on the 7th April 2011. It was also suggested that the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Transport may suggest a Cabinet decision be made in respect of the request for taxi drivers to use bus lanes as it could result in a significant change to the current policy. If a decision was found in favour then it would most likely be with a trial period of 6 months.

CONCLUDED that the Action Plan be noted and all requests for further information as detailed above be brought back to the Housing and Community Safety Select Committee meeting to be held on the 7th April 2011.

**HCS
49/10**

Review of Work

Members were provided with a brief synopsis of the work of the Housing and Community Safety Select Committee over the last four years. It gave the opportunity to reflect on its achievements as well as providing a basis on which to identify improvements it would suggest in which to improve the scrutiny process.

The Scrutiny Officer asked the Committee to give feedback on what they felt went well and whether or not they felt there were any areas which could be improved on when dealing with future reviews.

The Committee discussed that a recent meeting had been held with Tristar and it had been reported that 1 in 4 people looking for homes using the Choice Based Letting system had in fact turned down the home they were offered as it did not meet what they were looking for. There were fears raised that Tristar were not delivering what was intended with this scheme and Members suggested that a future review be considered. The Scrutiny Officer was asked to note and schedule for a future meeting of this Committee.

Members went on to highlight further areas within the report of past reviews where additional information be provided or where outstanding issues still

remained and requested that these be reported back to the Housing and Community Safety Select Committee to be held on 7th April 2011 as follows:

1) Registered Social landlords(RSL's)

It was detailed within the report that one of the Key Outcomes was that a protocol had been established to ensure positive communication between the Council and RSL's. The Chair suggested that all Councillors be contacted and asked if they could provide evidence or comment on any experiences they had had to support this. The Scrutiny Officer was asked to liaise with the Housing Strategy Team Leader to gather Councillor views.

2) Neighbourhood Policing/Watch/CCTV - March 2009

Members attention was drawn to the Key Outcomes/Impact of this review as it was reported that non-emergency calls received by either Cleveland Police or the Council's Community Protection services being transferred to the correct service to improve customer service could not be achieved. The Head of Community Protection informed Members this was out of Stockton Borough Council's control however he agreed to look into further to see if anything else could be done.

The Scrutiny Officer informed the Committee that the next review would be based on Community Safety and Security.

CONCLUDED that the

1) Review of Work be noted

2) A future review of choice based lettings to be agreed for a future date.

3) The additional information requested as detailed above be brought back to the Housing and Community Safety Select Committee meeting to be held on the 7th April 2011.