

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO COUNCIL

1st DECEMBER 2011.

**REPORT OF THE CORPORATE
DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES**

MEMBERS POLICY SEMINARS 2011 / 2012

SUMMARY

This report provides Council with an overview of content from the Members Policy Seminars held in October and November 2011 which comprised of a Focus on Education, Welfare Reform, consultations on Parliamentary Constituencies and "Caring for our Future" presentations. Supporting material from the seminar programme can be found on the member pages of the intranet.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Council are recommended to:

1. Receive this report and note its contents

BACKGROUND

1. Members Policy Seminars are an important vehicle for both informing and consulting with Members on a variety of topics from Policy and Legislative changes, contributions to Government consultations, and providing an update on local service provision from partner organisations. They are particularly useful for those issues which are of importance to the Council or partners but are in the early stages of development, or those which will be of interest to Members, out with the usual reporting arrangements.
2. A programme of seminars is set annually with events planned on a monthly basis. Topics are reviewed monthly by the Corporate Management Team to ensure issues are current and discussions and information provision is timely. Special, additional seminars are arranged as required.
3. The Policy Seminar programme has been in place since January 2009 and was evaluated in January 2010. The evaluation showed that there was overall a positive response from members who felt that they provided an opportunity for in depth discussion on a wide range of topics. Feedback was received on the format, acoustics and some of the venue choices. Where possible these issues have been addressed in the current programme.

SUMMARY OF SEMINARS HELD IN OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER 2011.

4. The October seminar included two items, a focus on Education in Stockton and an opportunity to inform Stockton's response to the Government consultation on the Review of Parliamentary Constituencies.

5. The focus on Education provided members with an overview of provision from Early Years through to Further and Higher Education provision. Speakers included Professor G Henderson, Vice Chancellor of Teesside University, Martin Clinton, the Principal of Stockton 6th Form College and Lynda Brown, Head of Children, Schools and Complex Needs Service. The presentation provided an overview of provision across the Borough, an update on Policy developments and potential impact, partnership working across our Education provision and highlighted current performance and issues facing the service at this time.
6. The presentation on the Review of Parliamentary constituencies provided an opportunity to inform the response to the current government consultation which closes on the 5th December 2011. The presentation provided the background to the review, outlined the proposed changes nationally and the impact of these changes for Stockton and the surrounding areas. Member's discussions provided comments which have been included in the response to this consultation and informed officers in Democratic Services who have since attended further regional workshops and seminars as part of wider consultation events. The review concludes in 2013.
7. An additional seminar was provided for members in October, to provide a policy update on the Welfare Reform Bill and the possible implications for the residents of Stockton. The presentation provided members with an understanding of information known to date, the timescales of these reforms and some case studies of the potential impact on residents within Stockton. The seminar was supported by colleagues from Housing, Council Tax and Housing Benefit, Welfare Rights and Finance.
8. The November Seminar provided members with an opportunity to inform the Authority's response to a Department of Health consultation on "Caring for our Future". With the significant changes in demographics in Stockton over the next 20 years, this provided an important opportunity to comment and shape the future of service provision. The consultation asked for views on the requirements of a future workforce, personalisation/choice, opportunities through the modernisation programme in the NHS for more integration, the future care market, opportunities through prevention and early intervention and the role of the financial services market in supporting users and carers in the future. The seminar was supported by colleagues in Health and Social Care who facilitated each of the discussion groups. Comments will feed into the Authority response which is required by the end of December 2011.
9. All slides , agenda and supporting material from the seminars can be accessed at <http://kyit.stockton.gov.uk/members/policyupdatesessions>
10. A regular update report on members seminar events held will be provided to Council at each meeting going forward.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial

11. There are no financial implications arising as a direct result of this report.

Legal

12. There are no legal implications arising as a direct result from this report.

RISK ASSESSMENT

13. This report is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

14. This report is not subject to Equality Impact Assessment as it makes no proposals for service development or policy change.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

15. Members Policy Seminars help the Council achieve all its objectives as outlined in the Sustainable Community Strategy.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

16. No external consultation has taken place on this report.

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Background Papers

None

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Members Policy Seminars affect all wards in the Borough.

Property

This report has no implications for the Council's Capital Programme and Asset Management Plan.

