

Council

A meeting of Council was held on Wednesday, 18th January, 2012.

Present: The Worshipful the Mayor (Cllr Paul Baker); Cllr Mrs Lynne Apedaile, Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Derrick Brown, Cllr Mark Chatburn, Cllr Julia Cherrett, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Michael Clark, Cllr David Coleman, Cllr Robert Cook, Cllr Nigel Cooke, Cllr Gillian Corr, Cllr Evaline Cunningham, Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Phillip Dennis, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr Kevin Faulks, Cllr Robert Gibson, Cllr David Harrington, Cllr Ben Houchen, Cllr Miss Barbara Inman, Cllr Mohammed Javed, Cllr Eileen Johnson, Cllr Elliot Kennedy, Cllr Jean Kirby, Cllr Paul Kirton, Cllr Terry Laing, Cllr Miss Tina Large, Cllr Colin Leckonby, Cllr Alan Lewis, Cllr Ken Lupton, Cllr Ray McCall, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr Mrs Kath Nelson, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Ross Patterson, Cllr Maurice Perry, Cllr Mrs Maureen Rigg, Cllr David Rose, Cllr Andrew Sherris, Cllr Michael Smith, Cllr Andrew Stephenson, Cllr Norma Stephenson, Cllr Mick Stoker, Cllr Tracey Stott, Cllr David Wilburn, Cllr Norma Wilburn, Cllr Mick Womphrey and Cllr Barry Woodhouse.

Officers: N Schneider (CE); D E Bond, P K Bell,(LD); P Dobson, M Batty (DNS); J Danks, L King (R); J Humphreys (CESC).

Also in attendance: Members of the public.

Apologies: Cllr Mick Eddy, Cllr John Gardner, Cllr Stephen Walmsley, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Mary Womphrey and Cllr Bill Woodhead.

C Frank Cook Former MP for Stockton North 170/11

Members stood in a minute's silence as a mark of respect for former MP for Stockton North Frank Cook.

C Declarations of Interest 171/11

All Members of the Council declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 11 - Members' Allowances as they were each entitled to receive some of the allowances under discussion.

C Minutes 172/11

The minutes of the special meeting held on 1st December 2011 and the minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 1st December 2011 were signed by the Worshipful the Mayor as a correct record.

C Public Question Time 173/11

The Director of Law and Democracy informed the Worshipful the Mayor that no Public Questions had been received.

C Annual Meeting 174/11

Consideration was given to a report on the Council's Annual Meeting for 2012 and onwards.

Prior to 2010 the Council had, for many years, held its Annual Meetings at Billingham Forum. However, because of redevelopment works at the Forum the last two meetings had been held at other venues. The redevelopment work had been completed.

The Members' Advisory Panel had received a series of reports, relating to the

Annual Meeting. Those reports provided the Panel with information about venues, format and costs.

The most recent report was considered by the Panel, at its meeting held on 25 November 2011, and, taking account of all the information the Panel had received it was agreed to recommend that Billingham Forum should be used for future Annual Meetings of the Council. A copy of the relevant minute was attached to the report.

Specifically, the Panel envisaged that the Forum Theatre would be used for the meeting itself and rooms within the Forum complex, such as the recently refurbished Function Room, would be used for the other events connected to the inauguration of the new Mayor. The Panel also suggested a format for the post meeting event for 2012.

RESOLVED that:-

1. Annual Meetings of the Council be held at Billingham Forum for 2012 and onwards.
2. Arrangements for the 2012 Annual Meeting be progressed in line with those suggested by the Members' Advisory Panel.

C 175/11 Cabinet Updates, Member Questions/Motions

Consideration was given to a report on Cabinet Updates at Council and the monitoring of motions adopted by Council.

At its meeting held on 19 October 2011, Council approved a number of recommendations put forward by the Members' Advisory Panel relating to arrangements for Ordinary meetings of Council. The decisions included:-

- ceasing to present minutes.
- the introduction of reports as a means for Cabinet, Committees etc to make recommendations to Council.
- the introduction of a synopsis of Member Policy Updates
- an increase in the required notice period for public questions and member questions and motions.

The Members Advisory Panel had also formulated a recommendation that provided that the Council agenda would include an opportunity for a Cabinet Member(s) to update Council on matters within their portfolio, either identified by themselves, or requested by other Members and the number of updates be restricted to one or two per meeting with a view to 'sharing out' the number of Executive updates throughout the year. The Panel had indicated that it would be undertaking further consideration of this matter in terms of how to deal with member feedback in response to a Cabinet Member Update.

The Panel met on 25 November 2011 and consideration was given to how other authorities within the region facilitated Member questions in response to Cabinet updates provided at full Council. A copy of the minute was attached to the report. It was reported that, from analysis of the approach adopted by other authorities who allowed Cabinet updates at Council, it was clear that such

updates were not intended to displace the facility allowed for more formal Member Questions to be submitted on notice.

The Panel agreed with this approach and felt that any query or question arising from the content of a Cabinet Update presented to Council should either be asked of the relevant officer/Cabinet Member outside of the meeting, should an immediate answer be required; or, alternatively, be submitted to the next meeting of Council as a Member Question, on notice. The Panel felt it was important for any update to be presented in such a way that all Members could understand which related bodies or organisations were being referred to in the update, and that the use of any acronyms be accompanied by an explanation. This would reduce the need for Members to ask questions for clarification.

The Panel was also of the view that given that the recent changes introduced regarding full Council meetings were in the early stages of implementation, that the introduction of Cabinet updates should only commence from the beginning of the next Municipal Year and rather than being delivered on a rolling programme, should in fact only be included at the Leader's discretion as and when topical issues emerged.

A summary of the use of the Member Questions procedure since the time it was last reviewed was also submitted. The Panel recognised the limitations for debate contained within the facility to submit Member Questions and the greater opportunities that were available for all Members to participate in debate through the submission of Member motions on notice. It was however indicated that there was no current procedure in place to keep Members informed of any progress made following any action agreed by Council as a direct result of a Member motion. The Head of Democratic Services advised that the implementation of such a mechanism would be investigated.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The Council Questions procedure be used as the appropriate mechanism to facilitate questions of Cabinet Members at Council meetings.
2. Any query or question arising from the content of a Cabinet Update presented to Council should either be asked of the relevant officer/Cabinet Member outside of the meeting should an immediate answer be required; or alternatively be submitted to the next meeting of Council as a Member Question on notice.
3. The introduction of Cabinet updates at Council meetings commences from the beginning of the next Municipal Year and only be included at the Leader's discretion as and when topical issues emerged.
4. The Head of Democratic Services be requested to implement an appropriate mechanism to monitor progress made against any motion adopted by full Council.

C **Community Participation Budget** **176/11**

Consideration was given to a report on the options for the future of the Community Participation Budget (CPB) which was set at £400K for 2011/12 and due to come to an end in March 2012.

At its meeting on 1st December 2012, Cabinet had considered the matter and a copy of the relevant minute was attached to the report.

CPB was allocated to Ward Members on the basis of population numbers in that ward and was used for a variety of small improvement schemes which ranged from dog bins to road safety initiatives and planting schemes. In many cases it had been used to lever in funds from a variety of other sources to deliver larger projects.

In 2007 the Small Environmental Improvements Budget was established as an outcome of a review of the Minor Highway Improvements budget by the Members Advisory Panel.

In 2008 the Small Environmental Improvements Budget was renamed the Community Participation Budget to reflect a broader remit and the strong links to community involvement and engagement in the process.

Since its inception in 2007 the CPB had demonstrated real value in local level democracy ensuring that residents and Ward Councillors had a resource that was available to target specific issues that may not otherwise attract mainstream funding. There were many examples of the successes that the project had brought which had ranged from resolving neighbourhood feuds by introducing additional car parking and CCTV to the contribution to wider accolades such as Britain in Bloom through enhanced bulb planting. Two case studies were attached to the report that demonstrated the impact of the budget.

Budget was allocated on the basis of population so the amount per ward varied from £22,690 in Ingleby Barwick West to £6,848 in Western Parishes with the average being £15K.

With this small budget it limited the scale of project delivery, however, in many examples this had been utilised to match fund schemes and deliver more significant improvements.

In broad terms the examples of projects that were listed within the report showed the range of impact of the budget.

Ward Members undertook consultation with the residents by a variety of methods to assess the need and nature of a particular proposal. This, coupled with their local knowledge of the issues in the ward, demonstrated a clear community link to delivery of minor improvements.

The CPB fitted well with many of the principles of the local and national policies on community engagement in decision making and delivery of local projects and was a clear demonstration of how devolved community budgets could and continued to make a real difference.

The ability of Members to take decisions on budget allocation to resolve local issues was an efficient and very effective use of resources as the disaggregation of such small budgets to a wide number of service areas would limit the overall impact of the funds available.

The eligibility criteria for funding of projects needed to be reviewed periodically to reflect changing circumstances and issues that arose locally. The process for reviewing the criteria was to be annual via a delegated decision to Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Transport. The eligibility criteria that evolved in 2007 and had subsequently been added to over the years was attached to the report. This remained as a guidance document for all Members in making decisions about allocating funding.

RESOLVED that the extension of the Community Participation Programme be agreed in principal subject to final approval as part of the 2012/13 budget setting process.

C 177/11 The Amalgamation of Heads of Service Posts and Arrangements for Appointment

Consideration was given to a report on the amalgamation of Heads of Service Posts and the arrangements for the appointment.

At its meeting on 1st December, Cabinet gave consideration to the amalgamation of the posts of Head of Communications and Head of Human Resources and agreed proposed arrangements for the Appointment Panel and the recruitment process. A copy of the relevant minute was attached to the report.

The Head of Communications resigned from her post on 22nd September 2011. Since then, interim arrangements had been put in place so that full consideration could be given to whether the post should be filled on a like for like basis. In addition the Head of Human Resources had indicated her wish to retire next year. The Council policy was that only essential vacancies should be filled and opportunities taken to reduce the establishment wherever possible through natural wastage. As a result of this policy, 672 vacancies had arisen between 1.12.2010 – 31.10.2011, of which only 122 had been filled, a net loss of 550 posts.

A review of the duties and responsibilities attaching to these posts showed that there were some synergies, particularly around internal communications, employee engagement and organisational development, as well as some minor areas of duplication. Amalgamating the two posts would therefore enable some efficiencies to be made as well as generating a saving of £100,800 per annum including on costs, subject to the grade of the new post being unchanged. Amalgamating these job roles therefore provided an opportunity of retaining the essential duties and responsibilities of the two posts whilst generating significant savings.

Cabinet agreed that the two posts should be amalgamated and that the grade of the new post should be established through the Council's job evaluation process.

The Council's Employment Procedure Rules required Cabinet, in certain circumstances, to consider and refer to full Council recommendations for approval in respect of the arrangements for the appointment of Heads of Service.

The recruitment arrangements were that all posts should be filled internally wherever possible both to provide redeployment opportunities for staff at risk of redundancy but also to potentially generate further savings. This post was therefore being advertised internally only in the first instance but if a successful appointment could not be made then a further report would be taken back to Cabinet for consideration.

In line with the normal arrangements for Chief Officer and Assistant Chief Officer Appointments, Cabinet recommended to Council that a Panel for the appointment of the Head of Human Resources and Communications be established. The proposal sought to achieve a political balance whilst limiting the total size of the Appointments Panel. This would give a panel comprising the Leader or Cabinet Member for Corporate Management and Finance and Cabinet Member for Access and Communities plus other Members, to achieve a political balance.

RESOLVED that the proposed Appointment Panel arrangements outlined at paragraph 7 of the report be approved.

C 178/11 Local Development Framework – Annual Monitoring Report

Consideration was given to a report on the Local Development Framework: Annual Monitoring Report.

At its meeting on 1st December 2011, Cabinet gave consideration and endorsed the Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Report. A copy of the relevant minute was attached to the report.

The report informed Members of the completion of the Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) for 2010/2011. A draft version of the report had been submitted to the Secretary of State in order to meet the 31 December 2011 deadline for the submission of AMRs. The AMR contained information about how the Council had performed against its Local Development Scheme and, following the adoption of the Core Strategy in March 2010, it also assessed progress against the Local Development Framework's (LDF) objectives using locally specific targets and indicators.

The AMR documented the Council's progress in meeting the timetable set out in the Local Development Scheme (LDS) and outlined the context of spatial planning and the LDF in Stockton. The AMR reported on the first year of the adopted Core Strategy and progress towards implementing policies, fulfilling objectives and achieving the Core Strategy's vision for the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees. It was based on the period 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011, known as the 'reporting year'.

The AMR reported progress against both Core and Local Output Indicators for to the period 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011. The AMR concluded that in most areas, progress was being made towards the LDF's objectives and this would increase as the Core Strategy and future DPDs were established as Council policy. The information gathered for the AMR represented a firm foundation of baseline data which would inform the development of future DPDs and SPDs.

In subsequent years, it was anticipated that the AMR would become an Authority Monitoring Report, in accordance with the Localism Bill and its draft regulations. Councils would be required to write a report for local people on key issues to be determined locally. Minimum information to be included in monitoring would include net additional affordable housing, Community Infrastructure Levy receipts, the number of neighbourhood plans that had been adopted, and action taken under the duty to co-operate. Where possible, this information had been included in the AMR. The new regulations would also require monitoring information to be made available online and in council offices.

The Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Report 2010/2011 was available through the e-genda system on the Council's website.

RESOLVED the Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Report 2010/11 be endorsed.

C
179/11 **Police and Crime Commissioners and Police and Crime Panels**

Consideration was given to a report on the Police & Commissioners and Police and Crime Panels.

At its meeting on 12 January 2012, Cabinet gave consideration to the matter and a copy of the relevant minute was attached to the report.

The report outlined the position in respect of Police and Crime Commissioners and Police and Crime Panels as a result of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

It was explained that the Act provided for the election of a Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for all provincial Police forces in England and Wales, and for the establishment of a Police and Crime Panel (PCP) to scrutinise the functions of the Commissioner.

Members were provided with details of the various legal powers, duties, responsibilities and other issues associated with the new arrangements.

It was proposed that the initial composition of the Cleveland Police & Crime Panel be as follows:-

- (a) Hartlepool Borough Council – two Elected Members
 - (b) Middlesbrough Borough Council – three Elected Members
 - (c) Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council – three Elected Members
 - (d) Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council - four Elected Members
- Total 12 Elected Members

Ten of the Elected Members would be direct nominees of individual Local Authorities and the remaining two would need to be co-opted by the original ten. The core members of the Panel would also be responsible for co-opting independent members (a minimum of two and a maximum of eight). Secretary of State approval would be required for more than two co-optees i.e. the two 'extra' Elected Members plus the two 'independents'. It was proposed that all twelve Elected Members had equal voting rights, including the opportunity to

elect or be elected as Chair or Vice Chair, and serve the same term of office. It was a requirement of the legislation that the 12 Elected Members should represent the political composition of the four Local Authorities. One possible solution, based on current numbers was provided to Members.

It was also proposed that Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council would act as lead authority for the Cleveland Police & Crime Panel.

Finally, it was proposed that the Cleveland Police & Crime Panel and the Durham & Darlington Police & Crime Panel extend reciprocal observer arrangements, i.e. one or more members of each panel would be invited to sit as an observer at the meetings of the other Panel.

It was explained that the proposals set out above and at paragraphs 9 to 11 of the report had been discussed and supported at a meeting of the Tees Valley Chief Executives Group on 17 August 2011.

Current police authorities would oversee effective the transition to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and creation of Police and Crime Panels. They would therefore need to:-

(a) plan and deliver an effective transition programme whilst recognising that the effective delivery of police authority and force business continues to remain paramount.

(b) be mindful of the continuing ongoing challenges facing police authorities and the police service, particularly the current difficult financial context, to continue secure value for money and financial efficiencies.

The Home Office had established a Police and Crime Commissioners Transition Programme Sponsorship Board, chaired by the Minister for Policing and Criminal Justice, Nick Herbert MP. Board membership consisted of key policing bodies: the Association of Police Authorities: Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO); Association of Police Authority Chief Executives (APACE); Association of Police Authority Treasurers (PATs) and the Local Government Association (LGA).

A number of projects were ongoing and the Board would work with the Government to facilitate effective transition from Police Authorities to PCCs. Work in progress included:-

(a) The Strategic Policing Requirement which will bridge the local policing agenda with regional and national policing needs.

(b) A Protocol setting out parameters within which the PCC and Chief Constable will deliver and govern.

(c) A policy on complaints against PCCs.

(d) A Financial Management Code of Practice which PCCs must comply with; and

(e) Agreement of transfer schemes setting out how assets, staff and liabilities will transfer to new arrangements.

RESOLVED:-

1. The report be noted.
2. The proposed composition of the Cleveland Police & Crime Panel, i.e. two Councillors from Hartlepool, three from Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland, and four from Stockton-on-Tees, be approved (this will involve seeking Secretary of State approval to go beyond the default option of 10 Councillors).
3. The proposal for Stockton to act as lead authority in respect of the Panel be approved.
4. The Cleveland Police & Crime Panel will have reciprocal observer arrangements with the Durham & Darlington Police & Crime Panel.
5. A further report detailing the rules of procedure and financial arrangements for the Panel be received.

C
180/11 **Members' Allowances**

Consideration was given to a report on the review of Members' Allowances.

The report provided details of the review of Members' Allowances by the Independent Remuneration Panel ("the Panel") and sought Council's agreement to any changes to the current year's scheme (2011/12) and agreement to the Allowances Scheme for 2012/13.

A new Panel was established with Council's approval on 7 September 2011 (CAB 37/11) and the Panel was asked to review Members' Allowances, with a view to making any recommendations for 2011/12 and for 2012/13.

The Panel concluded its review in December 2011. A copy of the Panel's report was attached to the report.

The Panel's recommendations were set out at paragraph 5 on page 10 of the report.

At its meeting on 12th January, Cabinet gave consideration to the matter and a copy of the relevant minute was attached to the report.

Cabinet supported many of the principles outlined in the Panel's report and recommendations, however, alternative proposals were submitted which Members considered, would be appropriate to Stockton on Tees Borough Council.

The proposals were:-

1. An overall budget reduction of 4% for 2012/13;
2. Basic Allowance (and Co-optee Allowance) frozen, reflecting employee position; for the period of this scheme, the Basic Allowance would be adjusted annually in accordance with National Joint Council for Local Government Employees . The period of the scheme would be 2012/13 to 2014/15 inclusively.

3. All Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) to be linked in % terms to the Leader's Allowance

i. Deputy Leader - 55% - (w.e.f. 1.6.11)

ii. Cabinet Members - 45%

iii. Chairs - 25%

iv. Vice Chairs - 12½%

v. Other Groups - 45% in total

Leader's Allowance to be linked as per the Basic Allowance with the consequent adjustment to SRAs.

4. Group Leaders' Allowances to be apportioned on Council seats won at election, rather than votes, with a minimum of 3 seats comprising a Group (5% of total, rounded up).

5. All Chairs and Vice Chairs to receive the same respective SRAs

6. No Councillor to receive more than one SRA from the Council with the exception of Mayoral Allowances; where a Councillor occupied two qualifying positions, then only the higher allowance be paid. The element of this proposal relating to a Councillor receiving no more than one SRA from the Council would, however, be the subject of further consultation.

7. Child Care and Dependent Carers' Allowances – no change.

8. 4% reduction to Mayoral & Deputy Mayoral Allowances, in line with savings elsewhere;

9. No change to Travel, Subsistence and Pensions.

Members noted the financial implications of the proposals for 2012/13, which would see a saving of £34,300:-

Basic - £9,300

Leader - £26,800

Deputy Leader - £14,740

Cabinet Member - £12,060

Committee Chair - £6,700

Committee Vice Chair - £3,350

Leader, Conservative - £5,360

Leader IBIS - £2,680

Leader TIA - £2,233

Leader Lib Dem - £1,787

Leader BIA - £0

Mayor - £16,800

Deputy Mayor - £5,280

Co opted - £650

The Leader of the Council informed Members that in the new Municipal Year there would be a review of the Cabinet Portfolios and the Council Select Committees. The Leader of the Council also thanked the Remuneration Panel for their work.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The proposals as detailed above be approved.
2. Further consultation take place, as detailed at 6 above.

C
181/11 **Review of Council's Petition Scheme**

Council considered a report relating to the Petition Scheme.

It was explained that in the period of just over a year following the introduction of the Council's new petition scheme in July 2010, a total of 13 paper petitions had been received.

2 petitions received exceeded the 2000 signature threshold required to trigger debate by full Council. For each of these meetings, additional resources were deployed to ensure the smooth hearing of these petitions. Pre-planning and facilitation of public and petitioner attendance, in addition to technical support where required, ensured that all parties were dealt with successfully. A draft procedure was also produced to assist Council in its consideration of each petition. It was evident however that there was some uncertainty at the conclusion of each debate as to what further action, if any, the Council intended to take on each petition, and this therefore highlighted a need for clarity for future situations to ensure that there was certainty regarding 'what will happen next' to each petition.

As part of the Council's new petition scheme, it was also agreed that an electronic petition scheme be procured and developed. This was completed and made available on the Council's website to the public in December 2010. Whilst no electronic petitions had as yet been received, the facility was utilised to indicate the details of all of the hard copy petitions received by the Council, and stated what action had been taken.

Neighbouring authorities were contacted to provide a comparison of the responses they had received since the implementation of their new petition schemes. The number of petitions received by the other Tees Valley Authorities was in the main less than Stockton, with only Middlesbrough having received a similar amount. None of the other Tees Valley authorities had received a petition that exceeded their threshold for triggering a full Council debate.

Members heard that since the introduction of the Council's new Petition Scheme Stockton had seen an increase in the number of petitions submitted. However, the actual number of petitions received was still fairly small in number.

It was also evident that after consideration of the petitions submitted that the quantity of valid signatures received was in some cases low in comparison to the number of people who had signed the petitions. It was highlighted that

unless the public visited the information contained on the Council's website prior to commencing their petition and read the guidance, they would not see the criteria a valid petition needed to meet and could often therefore be unaware that the format or content of part of their petition might be invalid. It was suggested that regular advice could be included within Stockton News outlining the conditions and requirements of the Council's Petition Scheme, for information could also be available within the Council's Contact Centre and information to be featured on the Council's website and Councillor web pages. The promotion of the scheme would also highlight to the public the option available to them for submitting petitions electronically.

From experience gained regarding the handling of the two petitions received that triggered a debate at full Council, difficulties were encountered in determining the number of members of the public who would attend the full Council meetings. This created a dilemma in terms of choice of meeting venue. If it was established that any more than 10 additional persons would be expected to attend full Council, it would be likely in each case that an alternative venue to the Council Chamber would be required to be found in order to accommodate all members, officers and the public. This could therefore result in the hire of a third party venue, with a small financial implication associated.

It was finally noted that no requests had been received from petitioners dissatisfied with the Council's response to their petition, which gave some indication that the scheme was working reasonably well.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The findings presented from the review of the Council's Petition Scheme be noted.
2. The Council continue to operate the scheme and seek to increase public awareness and understanding of its criteria via the community engagement and promotion initiatives outlined.
3. The further action identified as being necessary to ensure clarity of outcomes arising from a Council debate on a petition, be noted.

C **182/11** **Member Policy Update Synopsis**

Consideration was given to a report that provided an overview of content from the Members Policy Seminars held in December 2011 which comprised of a Focus on Policing in Stockton and the Police and Crime Commissioners and Police and Crime Panels presentations. Supporting material from the seminar programme could be found on the member pages of the intranet.

Members Policy Seminars were 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 were particularly useful for those issues which are of importance to the Council or partners but were in the early stages of development, or those which would be of interest to Members, out with the usual reporting arrangements.

A programme of seminars was set annually with events planned on a monthly basis. Topics were reviewed monthly by the Corporate Management Team to ensure issues were current and discussions and information provision was timely. Special, additional seminars were arranged as required.

The Policy Seminar programme had 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 had been addressed in the current programme. A further review was scheduled for 2012.

There had been one Member Seminar since the last report to Full Council. The December seminar included two items, a focus on Policing in Stockton and an update on the legislation regarding Police and Crime Commissioners and Police and Crime Panels. Nineteen Members attended. An update on Policing in Stockton was provided by Darren Best, the District Commander for Stockton Borough. His presentation covered the Police Profile, People, Performance, Finance and Future challenges. Members raised issues of communication regarding local policing issues in one particular locality and there was a commitment to address this. A number of questions were raised and answered in relation to the detail of specific crimes, detection rates and operational infrastructure.

The second presentation provided details of the new legislative requirements around Police and Crime Commissioners, and details of the election, which would take place in November 2012. Stockton Council would take the lead on these elections.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

C Nominations to Outside Bodies 2011/15

183/11

Consideration was given to a report on Council nominations. At its Annual Meeting, held on Wednesday 25 May 2011, the Council approved appointments to its Committees, Panels and Joint/Outside Bodies for 2011/15.

Subsequently the Council had been asked to make one appointment to the Schools' Forum. The following nominations had been received:-

Councillor Carol Clark
Councillor Ken Lupton

The Council had also been advised that, in addition to the four places it held, the Council could take a further place on the Association of North East Councils. The following nomination had been received:-

Councillor Norma Stephenson

An amendment was also proposed to the Corporate & Social Inclusion Select Committee as follows:-

Delete Councillor Mick Womphrey
Add councillor Mark Chatburn

RESOLVED that:-

1. Councillor Carol Clark be appointed to the Schools' Forum.
2. Councillor Norma Stephenson be appointed to the Association of North East Councils.
3. Councillor Mick Womphrey be deleted from Corporate & Social Inclusion Select Committee and Councillor Mark Chatburn be appointed to Corporate & Social Inclusion Select Committee.

C Members' Question Time

184/11

The Director of Law and Democracy informed the Worshipful the Mayor that no Member Questions had been received.

C Forward Plan and Leaders Statement

185/11

The Leader of the Council gave his Forward plan and Leaders Statement.

Cabinet had considered a programme of very positive proposals to regenerate Stockton Town Centre and the Leader looked forward to seeing work progressing on the first of these in the coming months.

The Boroughwide parking strategy approved at Cabinet in December had been "Called In" and would be considered by Executive Scrutiny Committee.

The Scrutiny Liaison Forum had agreed a scrutiny programme for the coming year. The Leader thanked everyone for all their hard work on scrutiny issues over the last year.

The first round of applications for funding from the Council's Voluntary and Community Sector Investment Fund programme had closed with more than 30 bids. A second round would follow later in the year.

The Mayor launched the Council's first Civic Awards in December aimed at honouring people, organisations or businesses who had made a real difference to their community. The Leader encouraged nominations before they closed on 28 February.

The assessors had begun work to improve energy efficiency at homes in Parkfield through the partnership with GoWarm to help remove households from fuel poverty, with the first installations to start soon.

The major shareholders in the Airport had announced their wish to sell their interest in it. The Council remained committed to the airport as an important part of the transport network and economic future and were supporting the process to find a buyer.

The veterans' community covenant agreed at the last meeting on Council would

be signed before the next Council meeting on March 7.

The Council had received a very good report on the Audit Commission's Annual Audit Letter, confirming how well the Council uses its resources and that the Council provided good value for money. BBC Tees covered this extensively and it was also featured in the Evening Gazette.

The Council had received news from the Royal Horticultural Society confirming that Stockton was a Finalist in the "Champion of Champions" section of Britain in Bloom 2012.

Matters to be considered at forthcoming meetings of the Cabinet included the Medium Term Financial Plan – setting the Council Tax and meeting the challenges and Members' New Local Code of Conduct.

The Leader was also looking forward to a very exciting year of events in 2012, including the Diamond Jubilee, the 25th anniversary of SIRF from 2 – 5 August, and a programme of events related to the Olympics.