

MEMBERS POLICY SEMINAR PROGRAMME

SUMMARY

This report provides Council with an overview of content from the Members Policy Seminar held in June 2012 which gave an update on the progress towards the development of the scheme for the Localisation of Council Tax.

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. A further review is scheduled for July 2012.

SUMMARY OF THE SEMINAR HELD SINCE LAST COUNCIL IN MAY 2012

4. There has been one Member Seminar since the last report to Full Council. The June seminar provided an opportunity for members to be briefed on the new Local Council Tax Support Scheme, detailing options for consideration by members.
5. The scheme is being introduced as the current scheme is being abolished from April 2013. The presentation detailed the parameters and criteria set out under the new guidance for the scheme, the key points to note are detailed below.

- Scheme and appeals procedures to be developed and adopted by 31 January 2013
 - Pensioners are protected
 - Consideration can be given to protection of other groups
 - New scheme funded by a fixed grant - 90% of expenditure
 - Financial pressures based on the different options
 - Consultation on the proposed scheme must take place.
 - Scheme will be based on the components of the current scheme
 - A common framework across Tees Valley
6. The presentation included details of a series of options around which the scheme can be developed; it highlighted the budget and financial implications of these options. A timetable for the development and approval of the scheme was shared.
7. The timescales for development, consultation and approval are very tight. Further support was offered to members in the lead up to the development and approval of the scheme ready for the consultation period. The draft scheme will receive approval by cabinet in August 2012.
8. Members highlighted the links between this scheme and the multiple changes that are starting to impact on residents through the Welfare Reform changes. This will continue to be a focus of the members seminar programme going forward.
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.

Julie Danks
Corporate director of Resources
Julie.danks@stockton.gov.uk
Tel number 01642 527007

Background Papers

Slides/ Presentation from the member seminar programmes.

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.