

MEMBERS POLICY SEMINAR PROGRAMME

SUMMARY

This report provides Council with an overview of content from the Members Policy Seminar held in July 2012 which gave an update on the Review of Learning Disabilities including consultation arrangements and an overview of the work of the Armed Forces. Two special drop in sessions were also organised for members to receive initial findings from the ILG work on the impact of Welfare Reform.

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 have been in place since January 2009 and 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.

SUMMARY OF THE SEMINAR HELD SINCE LAST COUNCIL IN JUNE 2012

3. There has been one Member Seminar since the last report to Full Council. The July seminar provided an opportunity for members to be briefed on the progress made to date with the review of services for Adults with Learning Disabilities and also a presentation by the Armed Forces Engagement Team on the services and support they currently provide to defend our country.
4. The Learning Disabilities Review covers all services provided and funded by Stockton on Tees Borough Council for working age adults. This is some 550 service users and covers a budget of £14.6 million gross. The Learning disability population is expected to grow by 11% by 2030.

5. Following an initial consultation in the early stages of the review, some key messages were received that went on to inform the main review activity. These included :
 - a. Day service lack variety
 - b. The time spent on travelling
 - c. Transition issues
 - d. Lack of local services
 - e. Respite services
 - f. Support for community enterprises
 - g. Personal Budgets
6. A series of actions were developed as a result of the consultation and the presentation updated members on the action taken to date which included, improved levels of intelligence leading to better future predictions of need/ improved service planning, better contract negotiation delivering improvements for service users, delivery of new services such as Autism, identifying housing needs and improved transition services.
7. The consultation provided information to inform the provision of services going forward and as a result a set of principles on which future services will be developed, has been proposed. These are the subject of an extensive consultation exercise which is ongoing throughout the summer months giving users, carers, providers etc opportunity to comment and participate in focus groups and consultation events. The results of this consultation will be used to inform service provision in the future. The outcome of the review is expected by the end of this financial year.
8. The second presentation was given to members by Majors Magdalen Miller and George Crozier from the Armed Forces Engagement Team. This presentation was to provide further background to members on the work of the Armed Forces in support of the Compact recently signed by the authority. The presentation provided details of the service army personnel provide, the support the Armed Forces gives them and their families whilst undertaking these duties and identified areas of support other organisations such as Local Authorities can provide, to both current and ex army personnel, during and after their length of service. The presentation was very informative and well received.
9. A further drop in session was arranged in July for members to receive the initial findings from the work that the ILG has undertaken on the impact of the Welfare Reform agenda on Stockton. These are early findings and further work to understand impact and behaviours around these changes continues.
10. All slides, agenda and supporting material from the seminars can be accessed at <http://kyit.stockton.gov.uk/members/policyupdatesessions>
11. 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
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.