

# Council

A meeting of Council was held on Wednesday, 23rd January, 2013.

**Present:** Cllr Lynne Apedaile (The Worshipful the Mayor); Cllr Paul Baker, Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Derrick Brown, Cllr Julia Cherrett, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Michael Clark, 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 John Gardner, Cllr Robert Gibson, Cllr Ben Houchen, Cllr Eileen Johnson, 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 Kathryn Nelson, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Ross Patterson, Cllr Maurice Perry, Cllr Mrs Maureen Rigg, Cllr Michael Smith, Cllr Norma Stephenson O.B.E, Cllr Mick Stoker, Cllr Tracey Stott, Cllr Steve Walmsley, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr David Wilburn, Cllr Norma Wilburn, Cllr Mrs Mary Womphrey, Cllr Mick Womphrey, Cllr Bill Woodhead and Cllr Barry Woodhouse.

**Officers:** N Schneider (CE); J Danks, B Brown, L Stephenson (R), J Humphreys (CESC); P Dobson, J Nixon (DNS)P Kelly (DPH); D E Bond, P K Bell (LD).

**Also in attendance:** 4 Members of the Public.

**Apologies:** Cllr Mark Chatburn, Cllr David Coleman, Cllr David Harrington, Cllr Barbara Inman, Cllr Mohammed Javed, Cllr Elliot Kennedy, Cllr Jean Kirby, Cllr David Rose, Cllr Andrew Sherris and Cllr Andrew Stephenson.

## **C       Declarations of Interest** **103/12**

Councillors Houchen declared a personal non prejudicial interests in respect of agenda item 8 - Delegation of NNDR1 Return / Financial Implications to Parish Councils of the Local Tax Support Scheme as he was member of Yarm Town Council.

Councillors Mrs Rigg, Lewis and Dennis declared personal non prejudicial interests in respect of agenda item 8 - Delegation of NNDR1 Return / Financial Implications to Parish Councils of the Local Tax Support Scheme as they were members of Egglecliffe and Egglecliffe Town Council.

Councillors Dalgarno, Large, Walmsley and Mrs Walmsley declared personal non prejudicial interests in respect of agenda item 8 - Delegation of NNDR1 Return / Financial Implications to Parish Councils of the Local Tax Support Scheme as they were members of Thornaby Town Council.

Councillors Mrs McCoy, Stoker, Mrs O'Donnell, Smith and McCall declared personal non prejudicial interests in respect of agenda item 8 - Delegation of NNDR1 Return / Financial Implications to Parish Councils of the Local Tax Support Scheme as they were members of Billingham Town Council.

Councillors Corr, Dixon and Patterson declared personal non prejudicial interests in respect of agenda item 8 - Delegation of NNDR1 Return / Financial Implications to Parish Councils of the Local Tax Support Scheme as they were members of Ingleby Barwick Town Council.

Councillors Baker, Woodhouse, McCoy, Wilburn, Mrs Wilburn, Johnson, Clark, Mrs Clark, Brown, Beall declared personal non prejudicial interests in respect of agenda item 10 - Motion to Council regarding Teesside Pension Fund investment in tobacco companies as they or a family member were members of the Teesside Pension Fund.

**C Minutes**

**104/12**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28th November 2012 were signed by the Worshipful the Mayor as a correct record.

**C Public Question Time**

**105/12**

The Director of Law & Democracy informed Members that no Public Questions had been received.

**C Members' Policy Seminar Programme**

**106/12**

Consideration was given to a report that provided an overview of content from the Members Policy Seminar held in November 2012 which provided updates on a further Boundary Commission consultation, the Councils 'Tell us Once' programme and progress towards the NHS Reforms, including the commissioning of the Health Watch Service. Members had also received information and an annual update from the Children's Local Safeguarding Board. Due to changes to the programme the December seminar was cancelled.

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 had been in place since January 2009 and were particularly useful for those issues which were 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 'Tell us Once' programme was operational in Stockton from October 2011. This was introduced as part of the DWP Programme which allowed information supplied once, to be shared with many Central and Local Government departments. The information was uploaded onto a Tell Us Once, IT system and then could be shared with 27 public sector organisations in relation to a death and 9 organisations in relation to birth information. Usage of the service in Stockton had increased over time and had a 77%(births) and 75% ( death) take up. Customer satisfaction levels with the service were very high.

Details of progress with the NHS reforms were presented by Peter Kelly Director of Public Health. The priorities, Structures, Public Health responsibilities and information on the new landscape were shared with members. An update and background to the commissioning arrangements and service provision of both

Health Watch and the NHS Complaints Advocacy Service were also discussed. Further progress reports were scheduled to come to the Member's seminars as part of the 2013 programme, as all these changes became effective from April 2013.

A special seminar was delivered by the Local Safeguarding Children's Board on their programme, with progress to date and an opportunity for discussion.

All slides, agenda and supporting material from the seminars could be accessed at:-

<http://kyit.stockton.gov.uk/members/policyupdatesessions>

A regular update report on Members seminar events held would be provided to Council at each meeting.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

### **C 107/12** **Gambling Act 2005 - Statement of Licensing Principles**

Consideration was given to a report on the Gambling Act 2005 - Statement of Licensing Principles.

Section 349 of the Gambling Act 2005 required licensing authorities to publish a "statement of the principles that they propose to apply in exercising their functions" under the Act, and that the statement of principles shall be reviewed every three years. The Statement of Licensing Principles was approved by Council in December 2009 and under the provisions of the Act, needed to be reviewed prior to re-publication in January 2013.

In preparing the statement of principles licensing authorities were required to:-

- Adhere to regulations issued by the Secretary of State
- Consider guidance issued to licensing authorities by the Gambling Commission
- Recognise the need to be reasonably consistent with the licensing objectives where applicable. The licensing objectives are set out at Section 1 of the Act and are:-

- Preventing gambling from being a source of crime and disorder, being associated with crime or disorder or being used to support crime
- Ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way
- Protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling

The Act also required the licensing authority to consult with the following people on its statement of principles:-

- (a) the Police
- (b) those who represent the interests; of gambling businesses in their area; and
- (c) those persons which represent interested persons likely to be affected by the exercise of the Authority's functions under the Act.

A revised statement of principles was drafted and after consideration by the Licensing Committee on 24 July 2012 was published for consultation. Consultation was carried out and in addition a public notice was placed in a local newspaper inviting comments and the consultation document was published on the Council's website. Only one letter with comments was received during the consultation period from the British Beer and Pub Association and a copy was attached to the report. Members were advised that this was the same response that was received before the initial statement of principles was determined in 2009.

Officers believed that the comments in the letter in respect of the grant of additional permits in alcohol licensed premises were adequately addressed in the Statement of Licensing Principles at paragraphs 24.2 – 24.6 and would not recommend any further amendments which could fetter the Council's discretion in being able to consider each application on its merits.

The Statement of Licensing Principles had been reviewed by the Licensing Committee at its meeting of 2 October 2012 when they recommended that the draft statement attached to the report be referred to Cabinet for approval.

At its meeting on 29 November 2012 Cabinet considered the report and a copy of the minute extract was attached to the report to the report.

RESOLVED the draft revised statement of principles be approved.

## **C 108/12**      **Local Council Tax Support Scheme**

Consideration was given to a report that provided details of the results of public consultation on the draft Local Council Tax Reduction scheme to replace council tax benefit. Sufficient responses were received from the consultation to provide statistically significant responses which showed the majority in agreement with all 7 principles of the scheme.

At the meeting of 9 August 2012 Cabinet members approved a draft Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) Scheme for public consultation. The report explained that the present council tax benefit scheme was being abolished with effect from 1 April 2013 and that each council must adopt a local replacement by 31 January 2013. Pensioners must receive the same level of support under LCTS schemes as they do under the present statutory scheme, but councils were free to design schemes for working age people as they see fit, subject to a number of prescribed requirements.

A key change was that whilst the present scheme was demand led, and fully funded by the Department for Work and Pensions, the new scheme would be funded by a fixed grant at a level at least 10% below that of estimated expenditure.

Members considered a number of options for the LCTS Scheme which were detailed within the report.

Taking into account available evidence Cabinet members approved a draft scheme for public consultation, based upon option B, together with the abolition

of second adult rebate and an increase of £5 per week in standard earnings disregards.

The report also explained that the timetable for implementation of LCTS was extremely tight and was detailed within the report.

A period of public consultation of 10 weeks from 13 August 2012 to 19 October 2013 was approved in order to allow sufficient time for the analysis of public responses prior to this second report to Cabinet.

Legal advice was that consultation should take place with those who were liable for Council Tax, rather than restricting consultation solely to those residents in receipt of council tax benefit. The rationale was that if, for example, the Council took the decision to go to the default position rather than choose a local scheme then this would impact on the wider council tax base as the Council would have to either find reserves to meet the gap or potentially look for savings in other areas of the Council affecting all council tax payers. The approved consultation plan included a number of engagement routes. Responses from each of the routes had been analysed and were detailed within the report.

Five public consultation sessions were held over the wider geography of Stockton. Whilst these events had not been very well attended (19 people/representatives attended) the detailed conversations held provided an opportunity to give individual advice to residents or to clarify the intentions of the scheme. Residents were then encouraged or assisted to complete the questionnaire to capture their views. Information on the draft scheme and consultation was also shared with a range of partnerships and groups (as identified in the consultation and engagement plan) to raise awareness and signpost to the consultation. A log of the meetings and events attended was attached to the report. The log also included text of 3 consultation responses received directly rather than via the questionnaires.

Officers held a meeting with Town Councils on 12.09.12 and attended the Parish Council Liaison Forum on 18.09.12. Following a brief introduction about the background to the changes and the draft LCTS scheme, there was discussion about the potential financial implications for town and parish councils. Attendees were also made aware of a Government consultation paper on this issue. There were questions about the timescales for the parishes to be advised of their new taxbases in order to set their precepts. An offer was made to supply estimated taxbase figures in advance of the publication of new taxbase regulations if individual parish councils thought these would be helpful and wanted to request them.

Police and fire authorities were statutory consultees, and were consulted during the development of the scheme proposals, and again following the start of the public consultation period. At the consultation meeting held on 12 June 2012 during development of scheme proposals both authorities indicated that they had no objections to the "shared reduction" proposal. Information relating to the draft scheme and public consultation process had been shared with both authorities. A further meeting was held on 9 November 2012, jointly with the other Tees Valley authorities and the precepting bodies. At that meeting each authority's proposals and impacts on the council tax base were outlined. Further discussion took place around the potential impact on collection rates. A further

meeting was planned for January 2013.

Given the very tight timescale for implementation of the changes the council's software supplier had been included as a consultee in these proposals. They had confirmed that they would provide the appropriate software which could be tailored by users to meet requirements of their local schemes. All requirements of Stockton's draft scheme could be met through this software. It was intended to release software for testing in December 2012. Costs of the software could be met from the DCLG implementation grant.

A letter had also been received from the Royal British Legion urging that 100% disregard was provided for military compensation payments, which included war widows and war disablement pensions. Members would be aware that such an enhancement to the housing and council tax benefit schemes had been operated in Stockton for over 20 years, and the proposed LCTS scheme for working age claimants included provision for 100% disregard of such payments. The regulations for the national pensioner LCTS schemes were not yet available but DCLG had given assurances that local authorities would be given powers to continue to provide for a 100% disregard of military compensation payments within the pensioner LCTS scheme. It was therefore recommended that this provision be included in the scheme for pensioner claimants. Since the Cabinet meeting the legislation had been approved and provision for the disregard was included in the scheme recommended for approval. However the assessment of the reduction for pensioner applicants in receipt of the savings credit element of pension credit was fully prescribed and no additional disregard could be made in these cases under the Council Tax Reduction scheme. Protection could be afforded by utilising provisions of s13A (1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. It was therefore recommended that war pensioners in receipt of savings credit should be prescribed as a class of people requiring assistance under s.13A (1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act. The additional assistance would be the deduction of the whole amount of the war pension received when calculating an application for Local Council Tax Reduction at s.36 of the Stockton scheme.

At their meeting of 9 August members considered a full financial appraisal of LCTS proposals including details of the impact on the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). This identified an anticipated pressure of £3.85m. Further details of the grant as part of the final settlement and the pressure was £3.45m.

On 16 October 2012 DCLG announced an additional £100million of funding for councils to help support them in developing well-designed council tax support schemes and maintain positive incentives to work. The new voluntary grant was intended to encourage "best practice" and would be available to councils (billing and major precepting authorities) who choose to design their local schemes so that:-

- those who would be on 100 per cent support under current council tax benefit arrangements pay between zero and no more than 8.5 per cent of their council tax liability;
- the taper rate does not increase above 25 per cent;
- there is no sharp reduction in support for those entering work

The statement also indicated that "Councils will rightly want to avoid collecting

small payments, and it may consequently be better value for money for councils to avoid designing schemes which seek to do so.” The grant was available for one year only to allow local authorities time to “explore more sustainable approaches to managing the funding reduction that minimise the impact on vulnerable taxpayers.” Clearly there was an encouragement for councils to identify savings elsewhere and not to pass on the funding reduction to people claiming council tax support.

Councils must make application for the grant after 31 January 2013, following scheme approval. Stockton’s proposed scheme did not meet the requirements, in that it was proposed that those currently receiving 100% support would have to pay 20% of their council tax liability. The additional cost of meeting the grant requirements had been calculated and were as follows:-

Additional cost of scheme for max. 8.5% contribution - £1,283,571  
Maximum grant (SBC plus preceptors) - £398,015  
Additional cost to be met by SBC - £885,556

Introducing a maximum contribution of 8.5% would equate to a council tax bill of £86 per year for a person living in a Band A property. Overall there would be around 6600 additional bills issued for less than £100 per year.

Given the additional financial pressures that would arise from securing this grant it was not recommended that Stockton makes an application for this funding.

The introduction of the LCTS scheme would impact upon low income residents in the borough, with 6,600 residents being required to pay council tax for the first time, and a further 6,100 required to pay an increased amount. For those that find themselves having to pay for the first time, a wide range of payment methods were available including cash / cheque/ debit or credit card at one of the Council’s cash offices, through the internet, cheque through the post, direct debit / standing order, over the telephone or at local Post Office and Pay zone outlets. In addition to the statutory 10 monthly payments, Council Tax payers could arrange to pay on a weekly, fortnightly or 12 monthly basis. Many of these people would also be affected by the wider welfare reforms and already be dealing with reductions in other benefits.

At their meeting of 9 August members approved the provision of £85,000 per annum for two years to provide advice and support to residents affected, with details of the support arrangements to be developed by officers. These arrangements had been made and the provisions were detailed within the report.

The introduction of LCTS was just one of a raft of wider welfare reform changes to be introduced in 2013, and many residents would be affected by more than one change. Key to supporting affected residents would be ensuring as many front line staff from both within the Council and other partner organisations such as health, registered providers etc had a reasonable level of awareness about the proposed welfare changes. A communications group had been established to consider how best to impart information to staff and also those directly affected and a communications plan was being produced. It was anticipated that the Council’s website would be utilised in addition to producing briefing materials for staff, an article in the March edition of Stockton News and some

drop in sessions for the public.

Some further analysis had been carried out showing the numbers of households affected by the proposals within each ward in the borough. Details of numbers affected and a map highlighting the working age households likely to be affected by the proposals were detailed within the report. The table also indicated the numbers of people in each ward who claim housing benefit in addition to council tax benefit. These residents may be affected by changes to housing benefit from April 2013 as well as the LCTS changes.

The Local Government Finance Act received Royal assent on 31 October 2012. The regulations were still awaited. An indicative timetable for publication of regulations relating to the various aspects of the scheme was detailed within the report.

End of November

Public consultation had been based upon a “plain English” draft of the LCTS scheme.

Cabinet considered the consultation results and draft scheme on 29 November and a copy of the decision record was attached to the report.

Since the Cabinet meeting, regulations specifying the content of schemes had been laid, and a technical draft of the Stockton Scheme had been prepared taking account of the regulations relating to schemes for both pensioners and working age recipients. The legislation referred to schemes as Local Council Tax Reduction Schemes (LCTR) and therefore the terminology in the scheme had been changed to reflect this. Amendments had also been made to continue to allow the full disregard of military compensation payments for most war pensioners over pension age. However the assessment of the reduction for pensioner applicants in receipt of the savings credit element of pension credit was fully prescribed, and therefore a recommendation was made to provide assistance under an alternative legislative provision.

The technical draft of the scheme was 178 pages long and was available to Members on the agenda system.

Following the publication of the legislation it was also possible to identify the changes required to the Council’s constitution to allow for the implementation and continuing administration of the new benefit. An additional recommendation had therefore been included in the report to give delegated authority to the Council's Director of Law and Democracy to make the required changes to the constitution.

An addendum to the report was circulated to Members that outlined that an equality impact assessment was carried out in July 2012 and made available to Cabinet members for their meeting of 9 August 2012, when the draft council tax support scheme was approved for public consultation. The Cabinet report indicated that the Equality Impact Assessment would be updated following public consultation.

The EIA was reviewed and updated in November 2012. The impact of the proposals on all recipients of Council Tax Benefit was calculated individually



and analysed to determine the effect on specific groups of claimants and to determine whether there would be likely to be any disproportionate impact on any group of residents. Pensioners would be protected by the proposals as required by law, but working age recipients of benefit would all have to pay more towards their council tax. A table within the report illustrated the effect upon groups of claimants. Groups such as lone parents, war widows and single under 25 year olds were more likely to qualify for the single person discount, and therefore had a lower council tax liability.

Extensive consultation had taken place with the public and with special interest groups relating to these proposals. Full details of the consultation were attached to the report. No concerns were raised relevant to the equality impact assessment.

The Equality Impact Assessment highlighted a negative impact in relation to encouraging participation in public life and access to council services, due to the proposed reduction in benefit payments. The effect was proportionate across all groups. Actions to mitigate effect this were detailed in the report "resident support". All other impacts were judged to have a neutral effect.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The responses to the consultation exercise be noted.
2. The Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme at Appendix 8 be approved.
3. The Local Council Tax Reduction scheme makes provision for a full disregard of military compensation payments ("war pensions"), where legislation permits.
4. Council prescribes war pensioners in receipt of savings credit as a class of people requiring assistance under s.13A (1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. The additional assistance provided will be the disregard of the whole amount of the war pension received when calculating an application for Local Council Tax Reduction at s.36 of the Stockton scheme.
5. The position with regard to additional government support be noted and this not be pursued for the reasons identified in the report.
6. The Director of Law and Democracy be authorised to make the necessary amendments to the Council's constitution to take account of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

**C 109/12 Delegation of NNDR1 Return / Financial Implications to Parish Councils of the Local Tax Support Scheme**

Consideration was given to a report relating to the new Business Rates retention scheme.

It was explained that within the new scheme, the NNDR1 return would set out the Council's forecast Business Rates income for the forthcoming year.

This forecast would be used to calculate:-

- The “central share” – the 50% to be paid to Government
- The fire authority share – 1%
- The Council’s share – 49%

It would also be used to form part of the calculation for levy / safety net payments.

The Council’s 49% share, plus top up or minus tariff, makes up the business rates income for budget setting purposes.

The Council was required to set its NNDR1 figure for 2013/2014 on or before 31 January 2013.

The starting point for the calculation would be the actual position at 30 September 2012 (factual information taken from an extract of the Council’s Business Rates system, frozen at the relevant date). The Council was required to adjust the figure to take account of an estimate of the change in rateable value between 1 October 2012 and 30 September 2013. This estimate would take into consideration factors such as:-

- Local knowledge
- Trend data
- Corporate strategy (such as the local business rates discount scheme for Stockton Town Centre)
- The outcome of appeals that are going through the appeals process

The Regulations that would underpin the Business Rates Retention Scheme would come into force before the start of the 2013-2014 financial year. They were currently in draft form and were worded in a way that required the billing authority to carry out the required calculations of business rates income and central/local shares, however the advice was that these tasks could be delegated in line with usual governance practices.

It was recommended that Council delegate responsibility to the Corporate Director of Resources in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Management & Finance.

Members were reminded that Council Tax Benefits would no longer be paid through Department for Work and Pensions and that the Council would receive a grant to fund the discounts attributable. This grant was at 10% lower than the previous levels of discount and the full financial implications had been covered in previous reports.

It had been recognised that there would be a financial impact on Town and Parish Councils, as awards of local council tax support were classed as discounts and had the effect of reducing the council tax base. There had been a Government consultation exercise considering how this should be handled. The Government had advised that Local Authorities would receive, as part of the grant to cover the cost of local council tax support discounts, an element to cover the impact on Town and Parish Councils. Local Authorities needed to determine whether to pass this grant through to Town and Parish Councils or whether to retain this funding and so pass on a financial pressure. The impact across the Borough was approximately £100,000 and it was therefore

recommended that this be passed to the Town and Parish Councils to compensate for their loss.

Cabinet had considered this item at its meeting on 10 January 2013 and a copy of the minute extract was attached to the report.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The annual setting of the Council's NNDR1 return figure (estimated business rates income), and calculation of the appropriate central / local shares, be delegated to the Corporate Director of Resources in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Management & Finance.

2. Council fund the financial shortfall for Town and Parish Councils in 2013/14 due to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme, which is £102,000, from the element of the grant allocated to the Council for this purpose. Also support be maintained at this level for future years, unless the amount of funding attributable to town and parish councils can be separately identified, in which case the amount of grant received each year will be passed on.

**C**      **Amendment to the Planning Committee**  
**110/12**

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 Council had been asked to make one amendment to the Planning Committee:-

Councillor Jean Kirby to be replaced by Councillor Gillian Corr as Vice Chair of the Planning Committee.

RESOLVED that Councillor Jean Kirby be replaced by Councillor Gillian Corr as Vice Chair of the Planning Committee.

**C**      **Motion**  
**111/12**

The following motion was submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12.1 moved by Councillor Julia Cherrett, seconded by Alan Lewis:-

"Smoking kills an average 339 people a year in this borough, by far the largest single cause of premature death. It kills around half of all life long smokers through cancer, cardio-vascular diseases and chronic lung disease. Half of those who are killed die in middle age. Smoking is also responsible for around half the difference in health inequalities between rich and poor.

In April 2013 Stockton Borough Council becomes responsible for improving public health and reducing health inequalities.

The Teesside Pension Fund currently has around £47.3 million invested in tobacco companies.

This Council calls on Teesside Pension Fund to:-

- a) seek the views of fund members (current, past and retired and including the other local authorities who are part of the fund) on divesting from tobacco
- b) seek the views of the Director of Public Health on this issue and to request him to seek the views of other Director's of Public Health in the Teesside Pension Fund.
- c) seek independent legal advice as to whether it will be permissible under the terms of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control article 5.3 for Teesside Pension Fund to maintain investments in tobacco from April 2013
- c) seek independent legal advice on how Teesside Pension Fund can legitimately divest from tobacco with a view to divesting from tobacco as soon as practicable.

Councillor Jim Beall moved and Councillor Steve Nelson seconded the following amendment:-

"The issue of the investment in tobacco companies by the Teesside Pension Fund be referred to Housing & Community Safety Select Committee as part of their review of tobacco control."

A vote then took place and the amended motion was agreed.

### **C Members' Question Time**

**112/12**

The Director of Law & Democracy informed Members that no Member Questions had been received.

### **C Forward Plan and Leaders Statement**

**113/12**

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

Congratulations were given to Councillor Norma Stephenson on receiving an OBE in the new year's honours. And also to George Glass on receiving the MBE.

Cabinet met on 10th January and considered a wide ranging agenda – of particular interest were the following items:-

- EIT Review of Learning Disabilities
- Updates on the development of Stockton and Billingham Town Centres
- The Annual Audit letter for 2012 the Audit Commission issued an unqualified audit opinion along with positive comments about the governance and value for money arrangements at the Council.
- A Statutory report in response to the 2012 flooding incidents

Cabinet met again on 16th January to consider the impact of the Provisional Financial settlement received in December and to agree an approach to developing the MTFP.

Other Significant Developments were:-

Regeneration

- Work was progressing well on Stockton High Street Phase 1 almost complete and Phase 2 work begins soon.
- Market Hall developments completed at Castlegate
- Billingham – All aspect so the redevelopment (town centre regeneration, John Whitehead Park, Customer Service Centre, Health Centre) progressing well
- The City Deal had bid been submitted

#### Community Safety

- The Chief Constable Appointment process would take place later around 25th January 2013
- The consultation about the future arrangements for the Probation Service was underway with a short timescale for reply – the deadline was 22nd February

#### Environment and Housing

- Parkfield and Swainby Road housing regeneration schemes were progressing well.

#### Arts, Culture and Leisure

- Preston Park Museum visitor numbers were at a record high. Since the hall re-opened on 27th July last year there had been over 94,000 visitors – this was more than twice the number in the comparable period before the hall closed for refurbishment. An official re-launch event was planned for 13th March 2013.

#### Children and Young People

- The unannounced Ofsted visit took place week commencing 14th January 2013 and the results were still awaited.

#### Your Council

- The 2012 MORI survey showed very positive results for Stockton Borough Council and for the Borough as a whole. The results were presented at a special Members Seminar.

#### Looking Ahead

Cabinet would meet on 7th February to consider:-

- New Executive arrangements regarding meetings and access to information to reflect new regulations
- A report on the review of the Police and Crime Commissioner elections
- The EIT Review of Mental Health Services

There was also a Members policy seminar on 14th February to consider the impact of Welfare Reforms.

Special Cabinet would take place on 21st February to consider the budget for 2013/14 prior to Special Council on 27th February.