

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO COUNCIL

6 MARCH 2013

**REPORT OF THE
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

MEMBERS POLICY SEMINAR PROGRAMME

SUMMARY

This report provides Council with an overview of content from the Members Policy Seminars held in January and February 2013 which provided updates on Policing in Stockton, a housing update from the Tri-Star Vela group, a presentation from Tees, Esk and Wear Valley Mental Health Foundation Trust, current position and progress on Welfare Reform and an overview of our contribution to the Government's consultation on a new measure for Child Poverty. A special seminar was held in January to feed back to members on the results of the Residents Survey undertaken in 2012.

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 TOPICS COVERED IN JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 2013.

3. The recently appointed Chief Superintendent for Stockton, Alastair Simpson provided an update on the Force restructure proposals, the Neighbourhood Structure and Engagement and current performance levels across the District. The new Police and Crime Commissioner's priorities have a key focus on Neighbourhood Policing, better deals for witnesses and victims, rehabilitation and prevention of offending, more effective partnership working and improved industrial and community relations. The main drivers for change are budget related and more effective partnerships are needed to make better use of resources. Despite a reduction in budget and officers in the Force, performance continues to improve with a downward trend in crime and antisocial behaviour. Favourable results were achieved through the recent residents survey undertaken in 2012, identifying

improved results for the crime related questions compared to results from the Place Survey undertaken in 2010.

4. Tristar Vela presented an overview of their second year of operations giving an update on their customer “offer promise”, the challenges ahead, their aspirations for the next 5 years and relationships with partners. The Group are making good progress with 212 out of 242 promises already delivered which has provided improved terms and conditions, more affordable rents and giving customers better value for money. This has been supported by a restructuring of property services, a new Tenancy Policy, increased money advice and employment support services. Satisfaction levels remain high with tenants. Challenges ahead include managing the impact of the Welfare Reform Legislation and conducting a number of reviews including the Concierge Service and ASB Neighbourhood Management. The presentation set out the company’s aspirations for the next 5 years which the Tristar Vela Group feel well positioned to deliver.
5. The Tees Esk and Wear Valley Mental Health Trust presentation provided members with the background to the work and structure of the Trust, geographical coverage, population base, funding arrangements and the extent of their service provision. The Trust has 10 key priorities for delivery which include improved access to services, improved patient feedback, responding to new business opportunities - recognising that times are changing, quality improvement, implementation of the Information Strategy and Financial Plan. There have been many improvements over the past few years not least of which is the property portfolio which has seen significant investment and now provides some very effective facilities for service users. There is an acknowledgment that this is a key area of service provision and one that has the potential for higher levels of demand over the coming years.
6. A number of elements of the Welfare Reform Act come into force from the 1st April 2013. Members received an update on the changes, details of analysis the direct impact where known on individuals, community groups and wards across the Borough. Future plans for the management and monitoring of the impact of the changes were shared with members.
7. The Government has recently consulted organisations on a definition for a new measure of Child Poverty. The consultation set out proposals for the development of a multi-dimensional measure of Child Poverty putting the case for changing the definition, suggesting areas for inclusion in a new measures and posed questions about the methodology for calculations, weightings and potential difficulties in collection. A set of principles were outlined in our response to this consultation acknowledging that this is a complex area with many influencing factors. It is hoped that any future measure developed takes account of the principles stated. A response form Government is expected in the summer of 2013.
8. A special seminar was held in January 2013 to provide members with feedback from the North East Residents Survey undertaken in the autumn of 2012. The presentation was delivered by Ipsos Mori sharing the methodology, results and analysis from the survey. Results are very positive across many aspects of the survey. This was acknowledged by members recognising input from elected members, officers and partners all contribute to the continued delivery of good quality services and information provision to our Communities.
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
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.