

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO COUNCIL

17 JULY 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 in June and July 2013, that provided an update on the position with respect to Dog Fouling across the Borough, Individual Electoral Registration and a demonstration of the Council's new Web Site.

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 TOPIC COVERED IN JUNE/ JULY 2013

3. Dog Fouling continues to be an emotive issue for residents and Elected Members across the Borough and one that is raised regularly at ward surgeries. Mike Batty, Head of Service for Community Safety, along with colleagues from the Environmental Health Team and the Care For your Area service, provided an update on current position across the Borough. The presentation included statistics on the current and historic position with respect to :

- Dog Fouling complaints with breakdown per ward including identification of perpetrator, seasonal variances etc
- Types of Service requests
- Fixed Penalty notices issued
- Numbers of stray dogs collected by the Authority

4. The presentation gave details of the enforcement action in place to deter such activity covering areas detailed below:
 - Permanent poster displays in places of common offences
 - Water soluble Spray paint deterrents used in paving areas
 - Dog Bin provision
 - Micro chipping/ neutering
 - Work with 'animal charity' organisations.
 - Patrol resource and routes patrolled across the Borough.
 - Awareness campaigns.
5. Enforcement actions are on going and reviewed periodically to ensure the most effective use is made of the resources available to tackle these issues. Evidence suggests that one of the best deterrents is the public themselves including dog walkers and owners. Amongst other considerations, use will be made of future editions of Stockton News to promote awareness of the issues raised as a result of dog fouling incidents across the Borough.
6. Individual Electoral Registration (IER) presents the biggest change to the electoral system in the last 150 years. IER requires each individual to register giving name, date of birth, address and National Insurance number. The registration process takes place over a period of time running from July 2013 through to December 2014 when the revised Individual Electoral Register is published. The process starts with a data matching exercise between the council and DWP where we anticipate a matching rate of approximately 60%. Properties not matched will then be followed up by a series of reminders and a door to door canvass. Every effort will be made to reach as many properties as possible using other data sets available. The changes will be publicised through campaign work and information in Stockton News providing paperwork for electors to complete to promote postal voting. The IER register will not be in operation for the European Elections in 2014 but the ability to use a postal vote will be affected if Individual Registration is not taken up by this point. Voting in the Parliamentary and local Election in 2015 will be based on the then published Individual Electoral Register. Further information will continue to be provided for members over the coming months, any queries can be forwarded to Democratic Services.
7. A demonstration of the new council web site provided members with background to the reasons for change, work undertaken to develop the new site, showcasing examples of the capability and revised layout of the of the new website both from a PC and through handheld devices such as I Phone/ I Pads. Now the site is live further development work will progress to ensure improvements are made making the most of developments in technology and the requirements of our users.
8. The next two member's seminars are scheduled for the 16th September 2013 covering NHS Reforms and an update on the work of Tees Valley unlimited including progress with City Deal Status. The session on 14th October will provide an update on the Impact of Welfare Reform and Education in the Borough including policy and legislative changes and the current position with respect to academy conversions.

9. A special Members Policy Seminar has been scheduled for Thursday 10th October 2013, Jim Cooke suite, Stockton Central library, providing an update on the Medium Term Financial Plan and the June 2013 Comprehensive Spending Review.
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.